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THE

VALIDITY OF BAPTISM

BY SPRINKLING, &c.

IN

TWO DISCOURSES,

BY DAVID OSGOOD, D. D.

AND A

CHURCH OF GOD DESCRIBED, &c.

IN

TWO DISCOURSES,

BY J. LATHROP, D. D.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CONDER, BUCKLERSBURY.

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THE

VALIDITY OF BAPTISM

BY SPRINKLING,

AND THE

RIGHT OF INFANTS TO THAT ORDINANCE,

SUPPORTED AND DEFENDED IN

TWO DISCOURSES,

DELIVERED AT MALDEN,

IN THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR 1804.

OCCASIONED BY THE

SETTING UP OF A BAPTIST SOCIETY

IN THAT PLACE.

BY DAVID OSGOOD, D. D.

Minister of a Church at Medford.

THIRD EDITION.

CHARLESTOWN, PRINTED:

LONDON:

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J. G. Barnard, Printer, Skinner-Street, London.

DISCOURSES.

ACTS x. 47.

Can any Man forbid Water, that these should not be Baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost, as well as we?

WHILE Peter was preaching the gospel salvation to Cornelius and his assembled friends, the Holy Ghost fell upon the hearers in a manner so visible and striking, as nearly to resemble what had before happened to the apostles themselves on the day of Pentecost. Observing this, Peter immediately proposes, in the words now read, the admission of these new converts to a regular standing in the christian church, by the ordinance instituted for that purpose. As they had already been baptized by the Holy Ghost, the water baptism, which they were now to receive, was in

tended as an outward seal or token of what they had inwardly experienced. The *one* was the immediate gift of God, producing a real change in the heart, purging it from sin and dead works, and bringing it to *the answer of a good conscience toward God*; the *other* was to be the work of man, and, of itself, could avail to nothing more than *the purifying of the flesh.* As a divine institution, however, rendered significant by the command of God, its observance becomes indispensably incumbent.

From the beginning, it hath pleased God, that they who acknowledge him, and embrace the true religion, should, by some visible mark or token, be separated and distinguished from the rest of mankind. When he admitted the patriarch Abraham and his family into a covenant relation to himself, and gave him that emphatical and comprehensive promise, *to be a God to him, and to his seed after him,* choosing them for his peculiar people; he condescended to confirm the engagement by an ordinance, which was to continue a standing memorial of his promise to them, and of their spe-

cial obligations to him. He was pleased to say, *This is my covenant*, or the sensible sign of it, *every man child among you shall be circumcised—and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.* By this significant rite, they were dedicated to God, and distinguished from the rest of the world, as his church and people. At the same time that it served as a pledge of the faithfulness of God in fulfilling his promises to them, it tended to remind them of their duty to him, of their obligations to purity of heart and life, and to perseverance in a course of holy obedience to his will. During the continuance of the Old-Testament dispensation, these purposes were answered by circumcision. But, on the publication of the gospel and the introduction of the Gentiles into the church, it pleased God to lay aside this bloody rite, and substitute baptism as an initiatory seal of his covenant. *Go ye, and disciple all nations, baptizing them,*—was the final charge of Christ to his apostles. As many as should receive the gospel were, by baptism, to be made visible disciples and members of the christian

church. As *Abraham received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had being yet uncircumcised;* so Cornelius and his friends received baptism as a seal of what they had already experienced in the gift and grace of the Holy Spirit. Neither the one ordinance or the other did, of itself, convey faith or any other inward grace to the subjects of it; but denote their regular entrance into the visible church and covenant relation to God as his professing people. As the one denoted a relation to the Jewish church, so the other denotes a relation to the Christian church. In this respect, both rites have the same import, and were evidently intended for the same purpose. As circumcision was not to be repeated or administered more than once to the same subject, so neither is baptism. In all the essential meanings therefore of the two rites, the one evidently succeeds the other, and was, probably, prefigured by it in the same manner as the Lord's supper, called the christian passover, was prefigured, under the law, by the Jewish passover. In a more

general sense, baptism may be understood as significant of all the essential duties and privileges of the christian profession. *As many of you*, says St. Paul to the Galatians, *as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ*: Your baptism denotes your submission to Christ in his mediatorial character, and your title to the blessings of his purchase, the washing away both of the guilt and pollution of your sins through faith in his blood, your separation from an unbelieving and sinful world, to be his peculiar people, and your incorporation into his mystical body, to walk with them in newness of life. In confirmation of this general import of baptism, referring to the things signified by it, the apostle adds, *by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free.*

With respect to the manner in which the ordinance ought to be administered; the form of words to be used on the occasion, is prescribed by our Lord himself,—*baptizing them in*, or *into, the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* To

be baptized into the name of another, denotes our taking that other person, for our master, and our standing in the relation of scholars or disciples to him. This we learn from that query to the Corinthians, *were ye baptized into the name of Paul?* They were called *John's disciples*, whom John had baptized; and when the same persons afterwards became the disciples of Christ, they were again baptized *in the name of Christ*, or, *of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*, thereby professing their subjection to that religion which God revealed by his Son, and confirmed by his Spirit. So long as this baptismal form of words be repeated, with the washing of water by the regularly authorized ministers of the gospel, and the whole ceremony is conducted with decency, piety and devotion; we may safely conclude that whatever is essential to the institution, is duly observed.

As for the opinion of those who look upon it essential to baptism, that a person be plunged all over in the water; when they act herein according to their serious and best udgment, we censure them not. We

are content that our brethren should understand the scriptures for themselves. Nay, we allow that some plausible things may be said in favour of immersion. We only request that *they* would judge as favourably of us, who have as much to say for ourselves as they, and, we think, somewhat more than they. The language of the text is evidently in favour of our mode of administration. Had Peter entertained the idea of plunging Cornelius and his friends, would he not have said, "Can any forbid our going forth to a bath or pool?" or, "can any forbid that these should be put into the water, that they may be baptized?" But, instead of this, he uses a form of speech which, I presume, no Baptist minister ever did adopt on such an occasion; he expresses himself in the very words which, we should expect, one of our ministers would have done under similar circumstances, *Can any man forbid water*, that is, forbid its being brought into the room? Is not this the most natural and obvious meaning—an idea which the form of words and mode of expression instantly and fully

excite in our minds? Accordingly, there is no hint of their going abroad, or of any other preparation in order to their being baptized, but that of bringing a little water into the room. The history leads us to believe, that it was performed at the very juncture when Peter proposed it, and in the very apartment in which they were then assembled. To me, indeed this appears the only mode in which the ordinance can be administered consistently with that order, decency and devotion which the gospel expressly requires in the whole deportment of a worshipping assembly. Their leaving the place of worship, streaming away in the open air, to some pond or river, and in all seasons and climates, changing their apparel in order to their being totally immersed in the water, out of which they come drenched and shivering; these circumstances are such an interruption of devotion, and are necessarily attended with such inconvenience, irregularity and confusion, as are, in my view, utterly inconsistent with *the beauty of holiness*, with that decorum and propriety which become the

house of God for ever. I never see a baptism thus conducted, without thinking of the superstitious fooleries of paganism or popery ; it surely has not the appearance of that *reasonable service* prescribed in the gospel.

The great Head of the church requires water to be used in baptism, and bread and wine in the eucharist ; but the precise quantity of these elements as pertaining to each ordinance, and the modes of administering them, seem to be left to the discretion of his members. To me it would appear as reasonable to deny the Lord's supper to be celebrated by those who make not a full meal on the occasion, as to deny those to have been baptized who did not pass wholly under the water. In all probability, our mode of celebrating the Supper is as different from that of the primitive christians, as is our mode of baptism ; yet we have no reason to doubt of the divine acceptance in either of these ordinances, when we seriously and conscientiously observe them. In the discourses of our Saviour, and in the writings of his apostles,

we are cautioned against a display of zeal about forms, against an over scrupulous exactness in the things pertaining to the outside of religion. Great precision in these matters is frequently accompanied with faulty negligence in things more weighty and important. *Bodily exercise,* we are told *profiteth but little.* We read of some who, though very exact in ceremonial observances, in diverse washings, and in making clean the outside, are yet censured for their inward pollution; who, while in some instances, they seemed to *strain at a gnat,* in others, would *swallow a camel.* To me nothing appears more incredible, than that the only way to heaven, should be by passing under the water; or, that a person plunged in the ocean, should be, in the sight of God, a whit freer from moral defilement, than another upon whose face a little water only has been poured or sprinkled. In my view, so far as I am capable of judging from the scriptures, the quantity of water used in the administration of the ordinance, is a circumstance of such indifference, that I should not think it a sub-

ject worthy of any serious discussion, did not our brethren of the Baptist persuasion deny the validity of our mode; and acting upon this principle, withhold communion from us, thereby treating us as unchristened heathens, aliens from the church and covenant of God. Should one of our members, though of a character the most exemplary and respectable, request communion with them, he would be refused, unless he would first, suffer them to plunge him in the water. His plea of having been baptized already in a way which he judges to be agreeable to the scriptures, would avail him nothing. They would answer, that he must submit to it in *their* way, or he could not be received. Each individual whom they can persuade to renounce his former baptism, by being thus baptized over again, they consider as recovered from a state of heathenism. These proselytes from other churches, they reckon as so many additions to the church of Christ, and his kingdom to be extended in proportion to the numbers *thus* obtained. Of course, they would rejoice in the overthrow of all the other

churches around them, in hope, from the general wreck, to collect materials for their own. Nor do they fail to take advantage of any neighbouring society when it happens to be shaken by divisions. Whatever falls adrift on such occasions, is usually secured by them.

If some individuals among them form honourable exceptions from this narrowness and bigotry; still, close communion, zeal in proselyting from other societies, and the re-baptizing of all their proselytes, being the discriminating spirit of their sect, all other christians are excluded from gospel union and fellowship with them. To the making of this division in the kingdom of our Redeemer, and the setting up of this wall of partition, they are led by a principle, in its own nature, the source of unceasing discord; I mean, their claim of an exclusive right to interpret the scriptures, and to impose *their* sense of them upon all believers. Nothing surely short of infallibility, can support such a claim. It rests precisely upon the same basis on which the hierarchy of the Romish church is built.

Like that, it infringes the right of private judgment, and destroys the equality which Christ ordained among his followers. Confident as we are, that our mode of baptism is more scriptural than their's, as well as more convenient, becoming, and suitable to the nature of religion and the purposes of devotion; still we are far from calling in question the validity of their's; nay, in condescension to the consciences of those who request it, our ministers scruple not to baptize by immersion. Were they equally liberal and candid, *the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* might be preserved, and all clamour, strife, and division, happily prevented. Upon whom, then, does the guilt of these evils lie?

Is our reverence for a divine institution to be measured by the quantity of water in which we are baptized? Does *such* a circumstance form the essence of our obedience to Christ? The laws of morality are, indeed, unalterable; but ritual laws, deriving their whole authority from positive institution, may be suspended or varied when a concurrence of circumstances ren-

ders them impracticable or extremely inconvenient. In such cases, " the letter of the law yields to the intention of the lawgiver, which was not to burden and distress any one by minute and scrupulous ordinances." Such variation was actually practised in the Jewish church, with respect to the ordinance of circumcision, the law of the sabbath, of the annual feasts, of sacrifices, and of ceremonies in general. By parity of reason, the ritual precepts of the gospel are to be thus accommodated to the circumstances of christians. While our Saviour severely censured the Scribes and Pharisees for their rigorous interpretations of the ceremonial precepts of their law, and the accumulated burdens thereby added to that ancient yoke; he spake of his own yoke as easy, and discovered a disposition to make it so, in his tender regard for the health and comfort of his disciples. When the latter were accused of violating the sanctity of the sabbath, by plucking some ears of corn to satisfy their hunger on that day; he justified them by showing that mercy is before sacrifice, and moral consi-

derations superior to ritual observances. Can we then suppose that he would require baptism by immersion, in all seasons and climates, and under all circumstances of health and constitution in his ministers and people? His observation on the occasion just referred to, that *the sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath*, applies, with all its force, to this institution; baptism was made for man, and is therefore to be administered in a way the most suitable and profitable to him; and not man for baptism, so that he should be obliged to submit to it in a form distracting to his thoughts and dangerous to his health.

In the warm climates of the east where baptism was first instituted, bathing was a common and a refreshing exercise; but the difference of climate in these northern regions, renders the idea of it, through a great part of the year, shocking to the feelings of most people. We are exhorted to *attend upon the Lord without distraction.* That mode of administering every ordinance, and of performing every act of religion, is al-

ways to be preferred which is the most subservient to the exercise of devout affections. But where is the person, who could receive baptism by immersion without having his thoughts wholly deranged, his mind so agitated, and his spirits so fluttered, as to render him utterly incapable of those devotional exercises which ought always to attend so solemn an ordinance. This reason alone, in modern times and cold countries, would be sufficient, on those scripture grounds already exhibited, to justify an alteration in the mode, were it a certain fact that immersion was the primitive practice.

There is another consideration not wholly unworthy of attention. The increase of knowledge and of the arts of civilization and refinement, in modern times, have established ideas of propriety and decency, very different from those which prevailed in the rude ages of antiquity. The scripture abounds with general cautions not to offend against these ideas. Our Lord himself, in many instances, "paid a condescending regard to the genius and customs of the

people among whom he lived ;" and his apostles after him, have enjoined it upon christians to *provide things honest* and decent *in the sight of all men,* and to *give none offence, either to Jew or Gentile, or to the church of God.* Baptism by immersion, might not, perhaps, eighteen hundred years ago, be offensive in Judea, nor can we say that it would disgust the uncultivated and unclothed inhabitants of the south of Africa even now, but it is certain, that the custom of plunging mixed multitudes of men and women, either in thin vestments, or in their usual dress, is deemed indecorous by most people accustomed to polished manners. If St. Paul, referring to the customs then prevailing in the cities of Greece, pronounced it *uncomely* for a woman to be seen worshipping God, *uncovered*; "professing christians in general, and women in particular, should see to it that they have the authority of an express command of Christ, before they submit to be thus plunged in water, with all the solemnity of a christian institution," in the presence of a congregation consisting of both sexes and

of all characters, lest they offend some, and give occasion to others to speak evil of the gospel and of its divine Author.

But where will they find his express command, so necessary to their justification, and to the support of their character for modesty and delicacy of manners? For myself I can safely say, that I have never met with it, though it be now more than thirty years since I began the habit of reading the scriptures in their original languages. Every person who has the like acquaintance with them, well knows that the Greek word for baptism, signifies any kind of washing, by sprinkling and affusion, as often, if not much oftener, than by dipping. The primitive word of which it is derived, is used in the *Septuagint* translation of the Old Testament, to denote the falling of the dew upon Nebuchadnezzar. What we read "was *wet* with the dew of heaven," is there, *baptized* with the dew of heaven. Of the Israelites, it is said, 1 Corinthians x. 2. that they "were all *baptized* unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea." If these words have any reference to

water baptism, they surely cannot mean that Moses plunged all the millions of people whom he led forth out of Egypt. This, indeed, was true of the Egyptian host pursuing after them, when the floods returned upon them, the depths covered them, and they sank, as lead, in the mighty waters. But, of the Israelites, it is said, *they walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea.* The only way therefore, in which they could have been baptized, must have been by their receiving a sprinkling from the cloud, hovering over them, or a spray from the waters standing, as a wall, on each side of them. In Mark vii. 4. we read, "When they (the Pharisees) come from the market, except they *wash,*" (in the Greek, *be baptized*) "they eat not." This is mentioned in order to account for their complaining of our Lord's disciples *for eating bread with unwashen hands.* In the language of scripture therefore, a man is said to be *baptized* when his hands only are washed; and what the Jewish mode of washing the hands was, we may learn from what is said of Elisha, that *he poured water upon the hands of Eli-*

jah. If pouring water upon the hands, be baptism in the scripture sense, can our Baptist brethren tell us, why pouring it upon the face may not be so too? It is added concerning the Pharisees, in the passage now cited "And many other things they hold, as the *washings* (in the Greek *the baptizings*) of cups, and pots, brazen vessels and of tables." Now, as these baptizings, both of their hands, and of their common utensils, and the furniture of their houses, were performed as religious ceremonies, we have the highest reason to believe that they were done by sprinkling; for this is the mode expressly required for accidental uncleannesses in Numb. xix. 18. "A clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in water, and *sprinkle* it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave." In cleansing the leper also, the priest was directed to "*sprinkle* upon him seven times." By sprinkling too, persons and things were consecrated to the service of God. Thus "Moses took the anointing oil,

and anointed the tabernacle, and all that was therein, to sanctify them." And "he *sprinkled* thereof upon the alter seven times —and poured it upon Aaron's head,—to sanctify him." The same ceremony was observed with the blood of the sacrifice: "Moses *sprinkled* it upon the altar round about, and took Aaron and his sons, and put of the blood upon the tip of their right ear, the thumbs of their right hands, and the great toes of their right feet." The covenant between God and his people was also ratified by *sprinkling*: "He took the blood of calves and of goats, with water and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and *sprinkled* both the book and all the people;—he *sprinkled* likewise both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry." Now these divers sprinklings are, in Heb. ix. 10. called *divers baptisms*. In our translation, the words are *divers washings*, but in the Greek, *divers baptisms*. The assertion therefore, so often repeated and so strenuously maintained, "that sprinkling is not baptizing," is, in direct terms, a contradiction of the word of God. According to our

Baptist brethren, the author of the epistle to the Hebrews ought "not to have used the word *baptisms*, unless the people, the book of the law, and the tabernacle itself, had been dipped in the blood or in water. He has however called them *baptisms*, though they were only sprinkled; and therefore we not only may, but ought to call sprinkling baptizing." It will, I believe, be difficult to find a single passage in scripture, which so fully authorizes us to give the name to immersion. At present, I am unable to recollect a single sentence in the whole Bible, in which immersion is the certain and express meaning of the word *baptism*.

As for those examples of baptisms recorded in scripture, which are supposed to have been administered by immersion, they are not related in such a manner as to leave no room for doubt with respect to the mode. We read, indeed, in our English translation, that, "Jesus was baptized by John in Jordan; and then came up *out* of the water;—and that the eunuch went down *into* the water with Philip, and when he was baptized, they came up *out* of the water." But whoever is capable

of reading these passages in the original Greek, must know that they might, with equal propriety, have been rendered,—"They went down *to*—were baptized *at*—and came up *from*, the water." Or, admitting that they stepped into the water, still this is no proof that they were plunged in it. In those warm regions, they might step into the edge of the water, when the design was only to sprinkle or pour a handful of water on the face.

Great stress is laid upon John's baptizing in or at Jordan. By the way, however, it ought to be remembered that his baptism was not the ordinance afterward instituted by Christ, nor was it administered in his name. Its main intention was to denote the repentance and reformation necessary to prepare the people for his speedy reception. As John was of the line of the priests, and accustomed to the observances peculiarly enjoined upon them, we are led to suppose that he might take the hint for baptizing at a river or current of water, from an order in the Levitical law, *to sprinkle the leper over running water in or-*

der to his cleansing. But, inasmuch as it is said, that John baptized in Enon, *because there was much water there,* it has been concluded that he did it by immersion. This however seems to be a hasty conclusion, supported by no other circumstance but the mention of *much water.* The words might be rendered *many streams* or *rivulets.* Accordingly travellers, who have examined the spot, report that " they consist of springs and a brook that a man might step over." It is not said that John chose this situation for the convenience of plunging his hearers. This is mere conjecture ; and if we attend to the circumstances of the history, we may conjecture another reason, in my view, more probable. The greater part of John's life was spent in the solitude of a dry and barren wilderness ; and when he entered on his public ministration, *there went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan.* This description gives us the idea of vast multitudes, not only from the metropolis, but from many other cities, towns, and villages, throughout the land, travelling on mules,

asses, camels, and all the various beasts of carriage. In a country where the inhabitants were so frequently distressed for the want of water, it was absolutely necessary that John should meet this immense concourse of people in a situation like that in the neighbourhood of Enon, whose many streams, in that sultry climate, might serve for their refreshment. As thousands were continually flocking in, and as those who had come from a distance would probably tarry some days, had there not been *much water* in the place, they would presently have been in danger of suffering. We may now appeal to the common sense of any person, whose mind is not blinded by prejudice, whether this be not a more natural and probable account for the mention of *much water*, than that which would represent John as standing up to his waste in a river from morning to night, and this, day after day, plunging a mixed multitude of all ages and sexes; Did he plunge them naked? or did he send them home dripping in their clothes? or did they bring change of raiment from home with them,

though, in all probability, few of them had any thought of being baptized, till after they had heard him preach? The history is totally silent with respect to all these suppositions; and, in my view, to believe either of them, is contrary to common sense and common decency, and even carries a reflection upon sacred scripture.

There is an expression, occuring once or twice in the writings of St. Paul, which seems to have full possession of the imagination of our Baptist brethren, and renders them positive that immersion was the primitive mode of baptism. It is found in Romans vi. 4. "We are *buried* with him by baptism into death;" and again in Colossians ii. 12. "*Buried* with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith." But in order to infer immersion from these texts, they should first prove that baptism was instituted as a memorial of Christ's burial and resurrection; and when they have proved this, they ought to administer it after the Eucharist which celebrates his death, and repeat the one as often as they do the other: For, no reason

can be assigned, why we should commemorate the death of Christ every month or two, and his burial and resurrection but once in our lives. Into such absurdities do people precipitate themselves by suffering their imaginations to become the interpreters of scripture. If they would lay their fancies aside, and let their reason judge of the meaning of these texts, they would, at once, see that, in them, there is no allusion to any mode of baptism. In each of these passages, the apostle is treating of that great moral change, which consists in putting off the old man with his lusts, dying unto sin, and reviving unto righteousness, into a new and holy life resembling that of Christ. As the principles of this great change originate in the *washing of regeneration* and *the renewing of the Holy Ghost*; as, by their baptism, believers profess such an inward renovation to have passed upon their hearts, and receive that ordinance as a sign and seal of it; for this reason, the apostle mentions their baptism as what had laid them under obligation to cease from their old evil habits and corrupt conversa-

tion as entirely, as they who are buried cease from among the living. In the same sense in which we are said to be *buried* with Christ in baptism, we are also said to be *crucified* with Christ, to *die* and to *rise* with Christ. All these expressions refer to the same thing, our being *created anew in Christ unto good works ;* and this is what our baptism denotes. Its mode of administration, therefore, refers as much to the crucifixion and death of Christ, as to his burial ; but, in reality, has no direct allusion to either.

Having considered some of those examples of baptism and passages of scripture, which have been thought the most favourable to immersion ; I shall now set before you some others, in which the probability is evidently against that mode. In Acts ii. 41, we read, *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized : and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.* This was the day of Pentecost, on which the Holy Ghost was poured forth upon the apostles, and they began to speak in different tongues. It was at a grand

festival, when Jerusalem was filled with foreign Jews, proselytes and strangers from all the different countries and nations into which the Israelites had been dispersed. The report of what had happened to the apostles, collected a great assembly, who came running together, astonished at hearing themselves addressed by apparently unlearned men, in each of those different languages which were peculiar to their respective countries. At length, Peter so gained the general attention as to deliver a long discourse. The effect of it was, the conversion of about three thousand of this mixed multitude, who were all immediately baptized. Now, they who think that it was done by immersion, should inform us, where the apostles found conveniences for the purpose in the midst of an hostile city; how they guarded against the tumult and danger to which such a procedure must have exposed them in the presence of an assembled nation, the bulk of whom, and all their rulers, civil and religious, were violent opposers; and if plunging men and women naked, would have been indecent, they

should also inform us, by what means these new converts, the most of whom were probably strangers from distant parts, provided themselves, at so short a warning, with suitable changes of apparel; and lastly, how the twelve apostles, the work being distributed among them, got through the labour of plunging several hundreds apiece, after having received a confession of faith from each of them; and all this in one day, which day seems to have been far advanced before any of this business was entered upon. Until these difficulties and improbabilities can be cleared up, we shall continue to believe that the three thousand were baptized in a way more expeditious than by that of immersion.

In Acts ix. 17, 18, 19, we thus read, "Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him, said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, and he received sight

forthwith, and arose and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened." Is there a single circumstance in this account of Saul's baptism, that would lead one to suspect that he was plunged? Does not the whole transaction appear to have passed in the house where he lodged, and in a very short time? Three days had elapsed since he had lain blind, astonished, and, beyond conception, agitated in mind; during which space of three days, he had neither ate nor drank. Worn down by so long fasting and by consternation of mind, equally weakening and wearing to the spirits, we may reasonably suppose that by this time, he had scarcely strength to raise himself up in his bed; and as his baptism is expressly mentioned as previous to his receiving any refreshment, is it probable that Annanias would have taken him, in his present exhausted and debiliated condition, out to a river or pond, or in any other way subjected him to the shock of immersion? They who make such strange suppositions to supply what is not hinted at in scripture, must, I think,

conceive of the apostles and first christians as beings very different from what reasonable men are found to be in modern times.

Equally improbable is it that the jailor and his household, mentioned in Acts xvi. were baptized by immersion. For this seems to have been done in the middle of the night. The apostles, Paul and Silas, had been committed to his custody. Having received a charge unusually strict, he thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. At midnight, a great earthquake shook the prison to its foundations; *all the doors flew open, and every one's bands were loosed.* The keeper awoke in great fright, and was about to dispatch himself. But when he perceived that the prisoners had not made their escape, nor were disposed to attempt it, his opinion of them was suddenly altered. A very different concern took possession of his mind. Having brought them out of the dungeon, or from what is called the inner prison, with the deepest humility, he inquired of them the way of salvation. They directed him to faith in Christ, and,

says the history "spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." Is there a single hint in this account which can give us the idea of immersion? Nay, with what eyes must *they* look at this passage of scripture, who can see the jailor with his whole family, and his prisoners, whom he was charged to keep at his peril, and whose backs were covered with blood and wounds from their severe scourging—having been beaten with rods, and received many stripes but a few hours before;—all this company thus circumstanced, turning out at midnight, groping their way in the dark, or going with lanterns, or torches, to a river or pool, no one knows where—through a city, just waked up by a great earthquake, and the streets probably filled with the terrified inhabitants? Would Paul and Silas have done such a thing? As was observed before such representations make the apostles to have acted a strange and unaccountable

part, inconsistent not only with reason and common sense, but with themselves ; for we find, in the morning, that they refused to leave the prison, till the magistrates came themselves to take them out. How absurd, then, is the supposition of their having gone abroad in the night, to plunge their converts? Do not all the circumstances mentioned in the history, tend strongly to confirm us in the belief that the jailor and his family were baptized by sprinkling or affusion?

That this was the mode in which the ordinance was administered to Cornelius and his friends, we have already shown the language of the text to be a proof nearly as decisive, as it would have been if the very word *sprinkling* had been used. As these persons are represented as baptized in the place where they were then assembled ; so, there is not a single instance among all the numerous baptisms mentioned in scripture, of a person's going from the place where he happened to be when he requested it, to any river, stream, pool or bath, in order to his receiving the ordi-

nance. All those persons who are said to be baptized in or at any river, or other collection of water, were by such waters at the time when they first offered themselves to baptism. If, upon any occasion, there was more water than would have been necessary for sprinkling, this was a matter of mere accident, and not a circumstance that was ever sought after, or the least pains taken to obtain. But had immersion been the universal practice, and essential to the due administration of the ordinance in all ages and climates; is it credible that all the writers of the New Testament should have observed such profound silence on the subject? They might have insisted upon it in terms so explicit, that no honest inquirer could have mistook their meaning. On the contrary, they have actually recommended *sprinkling* in the representations which they have given us of the things signified by baptism. These principally consist in our *justification through faith in the blood of Christ*, and in our sanctification by his Spirit.

With respect to the former, we read that

Jesus Christ *hath washed us from our sins in his own blood.* As a token of our being thus washed, we are directed to wash with water in baptism, *Now, why tarriest thou?* says Annanias to Saul; *arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins.* That blood, by which we are washed, and which actually *cleanses from all sin,* is with reference to its application to belivers, expressly called *the blood of sprinkling.* It was of old typified by the blood of the paschal lamb, *sprinkled* on the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, for their protection from the angel of death. It was also typified by the *sprinkling* of the blood of all the numerous sacrifices under the law. "If," says the writer to the Hebrews, "the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer *sprinkling* the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works?" Again in 1 Peter i. 2. christians are mentioned as "elected through sanctification of the Spirit, and *sprinkling* of the blood of Jesus Christ." Can any tell us, or is it possible for any to

imagine, why the application of the blood of Christ to believers was, under the law, typified by such manifold *sprinklings ;* and in the gospel is thus repeatedly called *the blood of sprinkling*, unless it be in allusion to baptism, its sign and seal ?

In regard to the other part of our salvation by Christ—our sanctification by his Spirit ; in what forms of speech is the gift of the Holy Spirit, for this purpose, set forth ? In what part of the Bible will you find the uncouth language of plunging or or dipping into the Holy Ghost, or words of a like confused and unintelligible import? Yet we know that baptism is the outward sign of regeneration, of *the renewing of the Holy Ghost*, which, says the apostle, *he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ. Shedding*, *pouring out*, or *sprinkling*, are the usual terms by which the donation of the Holy Spirit to christians is expressed. Thus, in our context, *on the Gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.* The language also of the many promises in the Old Testament, foretelling this blessing, is not, " I will *dip* or *plunge* you in clean

water, and ye shall be clean ;"—but, " I will *sprinkle* clean water upon you and ye shall be clean."—" My servant, (meaning the Messiah) shall *sprinkle* many nations." " I will *pour* water upon him that is thirsty." " I will *pour* my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." Do our Baptist brethren inquire after our scripture warrant for *sprinkling ?* Are not the many passages of scripture now mentioned, and many others, of similar import, which might be mentioned, warrant sufficient, full and ample, as we could wish ?

" Some are fond of being baptized by immersion, because in that form only the whole body is washed with water.—How, say they, can it be said that a person is baptized with water, when only a little water has been sprinkled or poured upon his face? We may answer this question by proposing another, viz. How could the apostles be said to be baptized with the Holy Ghost and with fire, when the celestial fire rested only upon their heads ? We have an account of that event in Acts ii. 3. *There appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and sat upon each of them.*

John the forerunner of Christ, foretelling that descent of the Spirit, says, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me, shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." If those were baptized with fire, upon whose heads only the fire rested, those are equally baptized with water, who have water sprinkled or poured upon their faces. Examine the words of John in both senses. If you suppose them alluding to immersion, you explain them thus: *As I baptize you unto repentance by plunging you in the water, so he that cometh after me, shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost by pouring it, in the likeness of cloven tongues of fire, upon your heads.*—But consider him as alluding to the custom of baptizing, by pouring water upon the head or face, his language is "As I pour water upon you in my baptism, so shall Jesus, ere long, baptize you with the Holy Ghost, pouring it down upon you as in streams of fire."—We need not ask which is the most natural construction of the words? But there is reason to ask, why should any require the plunging of

the whole body in baptism? We have searched the New Testament, from beginning to end, without finding any certain proof of either precept or example to enforce the requisition. But we have found, in answer to Peter's request to be washed all over, not his feet only, but his hands and his head, our Lord saying, *he that is washed*, i. e. spiritually, by regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, *needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit*;—words which, if considered as referring to baptism, are conclusive against the need of a total immersion. They probably led Peter, many years after, when having said, *Baptism doth now save us*, to add the following explanation, *not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God.* The *latter* is the baptism which saves us, and this indeed is essentially necessary, without which, the former baptism in any mode, and every other ordinance, will avail us nothing. They upon whose minds this truth is duly impressed, and who have a proper concern about the

things signified by baptism, will not, I think, be very scrupulous about the mode or form of its administration.

The stress which our Baptist brethren appear to lay upon this, and their narrow and uncharitable spirit manifested in excluding all other christians from their communion, are, in my view, their greatest and least excusable mistakes. Doth water commend us to God? Are we to be saved or lost according as a greater or less quantity of this element has been used in our baptism? Or does the discrimination consist in our being dipped in it, or having it poured or sprinkled upon us? Is this a difference of so momentous a nature, of such solemn importance, as to mark those who receive it in the *one* form as belonging to the kingdom of heaven, to the exclusion of those who receive it in the *other*; destroying all brotherly relation between them, rendering them incapable of using the means of grace together, causing the division of religious societes, the breaking up of churches, and the desertion of gospel-called and regularly ordained pastors?

Are these circumstances proofs of a revival of religion ? Do they proceed from that Spirit, whose fruits are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness? My brethren, there is another and a very different Spirit which, sometimes, under the guise of religion, gets possession of the minds of men, and renders them on a sudden remarkably zealous, not indeed of good works, but of innovation, for some new mode or form by which they think to secure heaven in a way more expeditious than that by which their pious ancestors ascended thither. *Beloved*, the gospel warns you *not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits whether they are of God ; for many false prophets are gone out into the world.* Like the master to whom they belong, " they go to and fro in the earth, and walk up and down in it. They creep into houses and lead away silly women ; throwing darkness upon their understandings, and prejudices and evil surmises into their hearts. Their subsistence, as well as their popularity, and the estimation to which they aspire, depend upon their success in

sowing discord among brethren, stirring up a party spirit, making divisions, and thereby advancing the cause of superstition and bigotry. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Are there any who "would sour and leaven your minds with uncharitableness; who would lead you away from the scriptures, to follow enthusiastic impressions and impulses; who endeavour to persuade by noise and clamour, and fierceness, and striking the passions, instead of enlightening the understanding by plain scripture, and fair calm reasoning; any that endeavour to move men from their steadfastness, by flatteries, or censures, by confidence, by pitying the blindness of others, or boasting of their own illuminations? Such as these you have reason to be cautious of hearkening unto. Take heed that you be not imposed on with chaff, instead of wheat; with vain dreams and hurtful prejudices, instead of divine truths. Make the scriptures the rule of your religion, according to the plain and natural interpretation of them; and let it be your care conscientiously to practise

agreeably to what you have already learned of the will of God. This is a good preservative against dangerous mistakes, and being carried about with divers and strange doctrines." *If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.*

LUKE xviii. 15, 16.

And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: But when his Disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them unto him, and said, suffer little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.

REASON leads us to expect, and revelation to believe, the immortality of the soul, and that every human being is an heir of eternity. This stamps an inconceivable value on man. Millions of silver and gold, crowns and kingdoms, and all the riches of the material creation, are nothing in the balance against a soul immortal. The moment a rational immortal spirit animates a human body, though it be yet in embryo, a spark is kindled that will never be extinguished. Yonder sun in the fir-

nament will, one day, sicken and languish, and all his fires become extinct: The stars which gild the celestial arch, shall fall from their orbits and be lost in darkness: The heavens themselves shall wax old and pass away: But this intellectual spark, kindled up in the moral world by the breath of the Almighty, shall burn on with undiminished, probably, with ever-increasing lustre through an endless duration.

The birth of an infant is so common and ordinary an event, that we hardly deem it worthy of notice; and in the eye of sense, the little helpless stranger makes but a diminutive appearance. But if we view it in the light which immortality throws upon it, if we consider it as emerging from eternal night into life without end, an heir of worlds unknown, destined to survive the funeral of material nature, and either to rise from glory to glory, by endless gradations ascending the scale of perfection; or to sink from gulf to gulf in the bottomless abyss of misery, according to the manner in which it shall acquit itself during its passage through this probationary state; con-

sidered in this light, how amazingly important is its birth, its entrance on this unceasing existence! What must the thoughtful parent feel, while he contemplates his new born child as thus beginning its career for a happy or miserable eternity! Aware of the numberless snares and temptations attending its pilgrimage in this strange country, previous to its return to the great Father of Spirits, and conscious of his own insufficiency successfully to guide, or effectually to guard it, even from temporal, and much less from spiritual dangers, what solicitude must he feel to devolve the ultimate and principal charge of it upon One mighty to save; and, if possible, engage for it the protection and blessing of Him, who is able to keep it unto life eternal! How wise and rational in itself, as well as consonant to the feelings of parental affection, was the conduct of those parents who, in the days of his flesh, thus brought their little children to the great Saviour of the world, imploring for them his favour and blessing?

Ages before the coming of the Messiah,

he was predicted under the character of a Shepherd; a Shepherd so tender and compassionate, that he would not only take care of his flock in general, but pay a special attention to those whose circumstances were peculiar, gathering up the feeble lambs in his arms, and carrying them in his bosom. The narration in our text sets before us the pleasing accomplishment of this ancient prophecy. The great and good Shepherd of the sheep was now in a part of the country where many of his chosen flock resided. So great was their veneration for him, that they not only brought their sick to him for healing, but their babes for his blessing. As these little ones were as yet incapable of being instructed by Christ, his disciples opposed their being presented to him, from an apprehension, perhaps, that they might be troublesome to their master. But though infants could receive no present instruction, they were capable of his blessing, and were as much the objects of his redemption as their parents, or as the disciples themselves. For this reason, our Lord was indignant,

much displeased, says the evangelist Mark, at this conduct of his disciples, and *rebuked them*. He frequently corrected their mistakes, but seldom with more pointed disapprobation, than when they would have kept little children from him, or discouraged their dedication to him. *Suffer them to come*, says he, *and forbid them not*; and then goes on to assign a reason why he would have them thus come or brought to him, a reason which ought to silence every objection, and for ever prevent any future exception against them, *for of such is the kingdom of God.*

In these words, we behold the great Head of the church numbering little children among the subjects of his kingdom; we hear him declaring their title to all the privileges of his church, either in its state of grace on earth, or in its state of glory in heaven. If the latter should be understood by *the kingdom of God*, still it presupposes an interest in the former. The extent of this grant is also worthy of our grateful notice. It is not limited to the few children then present, but ex-

tended to all like them, in every age and nation; of *such* is the kingdom of God. In John iii. 5. we are most solemnly assured that not one of our lapsed race can be the subject of this kingdom, unless he be regenerated by the Holy Spirit and water; *Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man* (in the Greek, *any one*), *be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.* The certain inference then is, that in pronouncing infants the subjects of his kingdom, our Lord has pronounced them the subjects of the regenerating influence of his spirit, and of the washing of water in baptism as the outward sign of such an inward influence. When he said, concerning little children, *of such is the kingdom of God*, he implicitly declared his will that they should be baptized. Authorized by this, and innumerable other passages of scripture, in which their seed are represented as included in the covenant made with themselves, christian parents have the unspeakable satisfaction of looking upon their infant offspring as born the subjects of Christ's kingdom, and as such they bring them to baptism, the ordinance by which

Christ requires his subjects to be distinguished from the rest of the world. To the feelings of pious parents, how consoling, how transportingly joyful is the opening of this prospect in favour of their offspring! Next to the hope of their own salvation, nothing can be to them the ground of more abundant thankfulness to God, of more overflowing gratitude to the Redeemer. Is there, however, a sect of our fellow christians who take the place of the erring disciples on this occasion, and, with airs and looks of disapprobation, attempt to hinder the dedication of our little ones to that Saviour who so kindly invites them to him, and so graciously calls them *his* subjects? Would they dissuade us from applying the seal of the covenant to those whom the great Mediator of the covenant has thus explicitly included in it? When, in obedience to the command of the great Shepherd, we are setting his mark upon his sheep, do they pretend, in opposition to his own declaration, that lambs are no part of his flock?

Controversy, my friends, is irksome and

undesirable, yet it is agreeable to the feelings of a generous mind, to plead the cause of those who are unable to speak for themselves. In the present question, I offer myself an advocate for little children, vindicating the title so graciously vouchsafed them in the text. I am indeed aware, that any arguments, however forcible in themselves, which touch the prejudices of ignorance and superstition, instead of curing them, have frequently an opposite effect, rendering them more inveterate and incurable; I would yet hope better things on this occasion, for more candour, liberality, and good sense in my present auditors; that they will hold themselves open to conviction, and ready to receive the truth in proportion as its evidence shall be duly exhibited. When I set before you any historical facts, you will do me the justice to believe that I state them with fairness and impartiality; and when I refer you to *the law and the testimony*, you will, like the noble Bereans, *search the scriptures* to satisfy yourselves with respect to their true meaning.

My hearers,—We ourselves, in general,

were baptized in our infancy; so were our parents, grand parents, and ancestors back for generations immemorial. This is the general practice of our country. In these United States, there are probably more than six millions of people, wearing the christian name. Of these, scarcely an hundredth part is of the Baptist persuasion; yet this is, I believe, a greater proportion than is to be found in any other country of Christendom. The Episcopalians, and great majority of Dissenters in England and Ireland, the Presbyterians of Seotland, the Greek churches in the Eastern hemisphere, as well as the Romanists of the West, together with the Lutherans, Calvinists and Protestants in general throughout Germany, France, the Low Countries, and the north of Europe,—are now, and have been for ages past, in the practice of infant baptism. Upon this subject, the Baptists and perhaps the Quakers excepted, there is but one sentiment among all the other numerous sects and denominations which compose the christian world. All these denominations,

however, are pronounced unbaptized, and virtually excommunicated by the little modern sect of Baptists. Infant Baptism is denounced a deviation from the footsteps of Christ's flock so gross, a corruption of his ordinance so essential, as renders it an absolute nullity. Of course, our pious forefathers, the first settlers of New England, whom we have been accustomed to esteem and venerate as possessing more of the spirit and customs of primitive christianity than any other description of people since the apostolic age, absolutely failed of an entrance into Christ's church, lived and died without the seal of God's covenant, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and destitute of all fellowship with the household of faith.

My Brethren, do not our minds revolt from such ideas? Does not our reason lead us to query whether they, who bring so heavy a charge against, not only their fellow christians now living, but against the former generations of God's people, may not themselves be the innovators, if not the corrupters of Christ's ordinance;

in short, whether the mistake may not be wholly on *their* side? Are the Baptist teachers so eminent for their erudition, the extent of their knowledge, the soundness of their judgment, and the uprightness of their views, as to be above the suspicion of error? Ought we, without inquiry or examination, to exchange the religious observances of our pious forefathers for the practices which these new teachers are so earnest to introduce? Does it become the steadfastness of sober enlightened christians to be so hasty in changing their religion? Since we are told with so confident an air, that infant baptism is a gross corruption of Christ's ordinance, have we not a right to demand of them, when, and by whom, this corruption was introduced? We are able to trace back *their* opinions upon the subject to the very period when those opinions were first divulged. History sets before us the first authors of those opinions, gives us their names and their characters. We know, with certainty, where, when, and by whom their sect was founded. But when we look back and

search the records of church history for the origin of infant baptism, we go up century after century without finding the least hint of its first introduction until we arrive to the very age of the apostles. Are we not then constrained to believe that it is coeval with christianity itself?

We acknowledge, indeed, that during the ages of darkness which preceded the Protestant reformation, the institutions, as well as the doctrines of Christ, were exceedingly corrupted by the mixture of human inventions. We learn from history the origin of these corruptions, and that, in each successive age, there were witnesses against them, whose testimony shows that they never were, even at the season of the thickest darkness, universally received. I shall now prove that infant baptism stands not on the foot of these corruptions, was not introduced with them, and during the course of many revolving ages, was not so much as once scrupled by a single christian. Of the writings of the primitive fathers, the immediate successors of the apostles, some scattered fragments only

have reached modern times; yet, in these fragments, we have unquestionable evidence that infant baptism was the general practice in the very century after the apostles. They had been dead about forty years, when *Justin Martyr* published his apology, in which he mentions some "aged christians who were made disciples in or from their infancy." This is understood as implying that they were baptized, as that was the known method of making visible disciples. *Irenæus*, who was born before the death of St. John, is yet more full in his testimony. *Origen* was born about one hundred years after the decease of the apostles, and from him we have these words, "The church received a tradition or order from the apostles to administer baptism to infants." About fifty years after this, or one hundred and fifty from the apostles, baptism being then universally considered as supplying the place of circumcision, a question arose, whether it ought not, as circumcision was, to be deferred till the eighth day after the birth of the child. For the discussion of this ques-

tion, a council of sixty-six bishops, or pastors of churches, was assembled at *Carthage*. In their result, they give it as their opinion, that "baptism ought least of all to be refused to a new born infant;" and as to its being put off to the eighth day, they add, "there is not one that approves of it: it appears to us all, who are here met in council, far otherwise." Undoubtedly some of the elders upon this council could remember what the practice of the church had been for seventy or eighty years before, at which period there were probably many living who were born within the age of the apostles, and who must have known what their practice had been. If the baptizing of infants had not originated with the apostles, is it credible that all the churches of Christendom should have so soon and so universally departed from the apostolic institution? If so striking and notorious an innovation had been attempted, is it not beyond all belief, that it should have been every where received without a single objection from any of those myriads of saints, confessors and

martyrs, who lived in the purest and best ages of the church ?

After this period, as we come down to the third and fourth centuries, the writings of *Austin*, *John Chrysostome*, *Pelagius*, and a multitude of others, show that, in those centuries, there was not a single exception to the baptism of infants. The learned Dr. *Wall*, who inquired most accurately into this subject, says, "For the first four hundred years, there appears only one man, *Tertullian*, that advised the *delay* of infant baptism, in some cases, and one *Gregory*, that did, perhaps, practice such delay, in the case of his own children; but no society so thinking, or so practising; nor any one man saying that it was unlawful to baptize infants. In the next seven hundred years, there is not so much as one man to be found, that either *spoke for*, or practised any such *delay*, but all the contrary. And when, about the year 1130, one sect among the Waldenses declared against the baptizing of infants, as being incapable of salvation, the main body of that people rejected their opinion; and they of them that

held that opinion, quickly dwindled away and disappeared, there being no more heard of, who held that tenet, until the rising of the German Antipedobaptists, in the year 1522." This account by Dr. *Wall* brings us down to the era of the Protestant reformation. Amidst the commotions attendant upon that great revolution, sprang up the founders of the present sect of Anabaptists. "Soon after *Luther*'s appearance," says Dr. Robertson in his history of Charles V. "the rashness or ignorance of some of his disciples led them to publish tenets no less absurd than pernicious, which being proposed to men extremely illiterate, but fond of novelty, and at a time when their minds were turned wholly towards religious speculations, gained too easy credit and authority among them.—The most remarkable of their religious tenets related to the sacrament of baptism, which, as they contended, ought to be administered only to persons grown up to years of understanding, and should be performed, not by sprinkling them with water, but by dipping them in it. For this

reason they condemned the baptism of infants, and rebaptizing all whom they admitted into their society, the sect came to be distinguished by the name of Anabaptists.—To this peculiar notion concerning baptism, they added other principles of a most enthusiastic as well as dangerous nature. By a monstrous and almost incredible conjunction, voluptuousness was ingrafted on religion, and dissolute riot accompanied the austerities of fanatical devotion.—Luther, who had testified against this fanatical spirit on its first appearance, now deeply lamented its progress, and exposed the delusion with great strength of argument, as well as acrimony of style."—Not *Luther* only, but *Calvin, Melancthon, Bullinger, Zuinglius, Gualter, Sleidan, Zanchy,* and indeed all the eminent reformers, united their voice in bearing solemn testimony against the principles of this sect, reprobating them in terms of great severity.

Perhaps these great and good men would have used less asperity of language in speaking of them, had they been chargeable

with no other errors besides those relating to baptism; but, in that age, they did not content themselves with disturbing the peace of religious societies, and breaking up of churches: they committed outrages upon civil society, which united all the states of Germany against them. They were subdued and dispersed by military force. But, as generally happens in this mode of suppressing any sect or party, the fugitives were the more confirmed in the belief of their principal peculiarities, and spread their tenets in every country whither they fled for shelter. Dropping the extravagances which had armed the civil magistrates against them, they rigidly adhered to many of their other notions. "The party," says Dr. Robertson, "still subsists in the *Low Countries*, and a small number of this sect is settled in England." Having found their way into England, some of them very early appeared in America, formed a society at *Swanzy*, and another at Boston, in the year 1665. Of this last, Dr. Mather relates, "that they admitted into their society persons whom our

churches had excommunicated for moral scandal, and employed them as administrators of the two sacraments."—From such an origin and such beginnings has this sect arisen. If there be any truth in history, their opinions are wholly modern and unknown to antiquity. If infant baptism be an human invention and an absolute nullity, as they pretend, it is certain that, three centuries ago, there was not a society of baptized christians in the world, nor had been for many preceding ages. What then are we to conclude? Did the church of Christ remain, during the lapse of centuries, overpowered by the *gates of hell?* If we could suppose this; yet, would it not be more difficult still to suppose, that it was, at length, recovered by the *madmen* of *Munster*, the German Anabaptists?

Though the scriptures be, at last, our only sure guide, yet it is a satisfaction to know in what sense our fellow christians understand the scriptures with reference to any disputed point, and how they have been understood by the church of Christ in former ages; and if we be able, as in this

question concerning infant baptism, to trace the practice of it up through all preceding ages to that of the apostles, it must be allowed a strong presumptive argument in favour of its having originated with the apostles themselves. It is, in this way, that we argue the change of the sabbath from the last to the first day of the week. The New Testament contains no express order or command upon the subject; but as we can trace the observance of the first day of the week up to the age of the apostles, and find that *they* actually met on that day for religious worship, we conclude that the practice originated from their authority and appointment. In my view, the argument is equally full and strong in favour of infant baptism.

But I shall now go on to set before you the scripture authority for this practice. An illustration of all the numerous passages of scripture countenancing it, cannot be expected in a single discourse. I propose but a brief sketch of the principal arguments. As there is absolutely no text or sentence in the whole Bible forbidding it,

if we can find any degree of evidence in its favour, if, from the reasonableness of the thing and the general tenor of scripture, we have room to believe that it will not be displeasing to God for pious parents, in dedicating themselves to him, to give up their offspring also in an ordinance which seals and marks them as the subjects of the Redeemer's kingdom, no religious parent ought to delay the seeking of this privilege for his children.

If we consider what the law of nature and nations teaches concerning a state of infancy, it may afford a probable presumption that, if the parents sustain a visible relation to the church and people of God, their infant offspring are also to be viewed as belonging to the same society. It was never made a question among any civilized people, whether parents had a right to covenant for their children, as well as for themselves. By virtue of such engagements, children in all countries, as they arrive to years of discretion, not only inherit the possessions of their parents, but enjoy many privileges. They are considered

as parts of the community, and are treated as such. No sovereign prince would think the honour of his kingdom consulted by those who should go about to deny the children born within his realm to be his subjects. As these form a large proportion of the subjects of every government, it would be accounted the height of absurdity for any to pretend that, till they have themselves sworn allegiance, they neither owe obedience to the government, nor are entitled to its protection. By the Mosaic law, it was provided that, if a servant married and had children, all the children born in his master's house were to be considered as the property of the master, subject to his authority, and entitled to his support and protection. Is it not equally reasonable that the children of Christ's servants should be considered as belonging to him; that they who are born in his house, should be acknowledged as members of his family? David seems to have viewed it in this light when, in manifest allusion to the law now mentioned, he says, *O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant and the son of*

thy hand-maid, i. e. born in thy house.

It is granted on all hands, that the covenant of works made with the first Adam, included his offspring. We all feel the fatal consequences of his breach of that covenant. *By the offence of one, judgment is come upon all men to condemnation*, and the whole race cut off from justification and life by the deeds of the law, or on the condition of the covenant of works. The hopes of all mankind now rest on the second Adam, on the covenant of grace in the hands of the Mediator. The scriptures lead us to view him as the channel through which the whole current of divine mercy, in temporal as well as spiritual blessings, is conveyed to an apostate world. From the beginning, faith in him has been the condition of our reconciliation to God through him. Adam, after his fall, with all the patriarchs, and the whole Old Testament church, founded their hopes on the promised *seed of the woman*, and believed in a Saviour to come, in the same manner as christians now believe in him as already come. The faith of the former regarded its objects as

future ; that of the latter as already manifested. With this circumstantial difference, the principle is the same in both. But infants, at all times are equally incapable of the exercise of faith. With this condition of the covenant of grace, required of adults, their new born offspring cannot comply. Yet they stand in equal need of the blessings and privileges of this covenant. By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passes upon all men, even upon those who have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. Little infants are no sooner born, than they become liable to the penal consequences of Adam's sin, and suffer, as his descendants, not only many infirmities and miseries while they live ; but multitudes of them sink into the darkness of the grave almost as soon as they receive the light of life. It has been computed that a third part, if not half, of the human race die in infancy. Are they lost in perdition, or swept back into nonentity? Is it not more consonant to scripture, as well as to reason, to believe, that if, without

their personal consent, they were so included in the covenant of works as to be subjected to the manifold evils consequent upon its breach, their own personal consent (which it is equally impossible for them to give) should not be necessary in order to their being entitled to the privileges and blessings of the covenant of grace? Is not this hope, concerning them, encouraged by the favourable terms in which they are frequently mentioned in scripture? For their sakes, God sometimes averts or delays the threatened ruin of whole communities. *Should not I spare Nineveh that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left?*

But though the children of heathen parents should be considered as left to the uncovenanted mercy of God; yet surely there is some special room for hope concerning those of his covenant and professing people. The pious parent, in entering into covenant with God, and giving up himself, does, at the same time, dedicate to Him and his service whatever he can call

his own, making over all his rights and interests to God, and submitting the whole to his disposal. His children, above all his other possessions, are the objects of his greatest affection and concern. These therefore are, in special, devoted to God with fervent supplications that they may be his, wholly and forever; and, if they be so included in the covenant made with their parent as to receive the promise of God's *blessing* and *spirit;* if they have been redeemed by Christ, ought they not to be baptized in token of that redemption?

Jewish parents were allowed to make vows in the name of their children, which vows those children, as they came of age, were bound to perform. By virtue of the paternal authority, and on the supposed right of the parent to covenant for his child in all things pertaining to the child's interest and happiness, it was lawful for parents to dedicate their children to the immediate and special service of God. Thus the mother of the prophet Samuel vowed him to the Lord before he was born, and, from his birth, dedicated him to the

service of the tabernacle under the high priest; and it seems that God approved of the vow, and accepted the gift. Have not christian parents the same right to dispose of their children? May not they, by the same paternal authority, and, for the same reason, in baptism dedicate their children to be the servants of Christ? When we thus present our little ones to the gracious Redeemer, can there be any other question but this, whether he will accept them? I congratulate you, Christians, on the assurance which we have received, that when he was here on earth, a fair experiment of the case was tried, and our text contains his decision.

By thus deciding, however, he did but confirm privileges which had been always enjoyed by the children of his professing people. Consult your Bibles, and you will find the signal deliverances wrought in favour of God's servants, his promises to them and covenant transactions with them, bearing, in almost every instance, a respect unto their offspring. To *Noah* he said, Genesis vii. 1. *Come thou, and all thy*

house, into the ark : for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation. On account of *his* righteousness, his whole family were allowed to share with him in the privileges of the ark. Again, God says, chap. ix. 9. "And I, behold I establish my covenant with you, and with your *seed* after you." In the rescue of righteous Lot from the overthrow of Sodom, for *his* sake, we find the offer of the same deliverance extended to his whole family, and even to the young men who were but forming an alliance with his daughters. So the faith of Rahab the harlot availed, not only to her own preservation, but to that of all her relations. If it should be said, that these were temporal deliverances and blessings only, still it must be acknowledged that they were vouchsafed through Christ, in consequence of the covenant of redemption, and were typical of spiritual and eternal blessings.

The new covenant was virtually proposed to our first parents when they received the first promise of a Saviour, and their family was thereby constituted the

visible church and people of God. It continued in the families of such of their descendants as adhered to the knowledge and worship of the true God. As we have no account of public assemblies during the patriarchal age, the ordinances of God, and the forms of social worship seem to have been kept up and celebrated in seperate and distinct families only. A foundation however for a national church was early laid, in the call and separation of Abraham and his posterity from the rest of the world, to be the peculiar people of God. All the blessings of the gospel were comprised in the promise made to him on that occasion. This promise, together with the seal of God's covenant, was expressly extended to his posterity through their successive generations. In this language did the Almighty address his faithful servant, Gen. xvii. *I will establish my covenant with thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.—This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee ; every man child among you shall be*

circumcised—and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you. That the covenant here mentioned was the same covenant of grace which is made with believers under the gospel, can, with no shew of reason, be doubted. The promise, *I will be a God to thee and to thy seed,* includes blessings of every kind. Accordingly the prophets in predicting the outpouring of the Spirit, the forgiveness of sins, and a new heart, represent God, in the bestowment of these blessings, as fulfilling this his covenant with Abraham, *performing the truth unto Jacob, and the mercy which he swore to the fathers of old.* To the same promise, the writers of the New Testament frequently refer while illustrating the blessings of the gospel. It is also observable that the token of the covenant here enjoined upon Abraham and his seed, is expressly called *the seal of the righteousness of faith.* From this, it appears that faith was really the condition of the Abrahamic, as it is of the gospel covenant, and was as truly denoted by circumcision of old, as it is by baptism now. Thus we see that, in this

early constitution of God's church, infants were, by this authority, made members, included in the covenant with their parents, and received the seal of the covenant in circumcision. In this ordinance did Abraham and his numerous descendants, through their successive generations, give up their infant offspring to God, and initiate them into his visible church. At a most solemn renewal of this covenant, described Deut. xxix. Moses says to the asssembled tribes of Israel, "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God—all the men of Israel, your wives, your *little ones*—that thou shouldest enter into a covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath—that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers." Express reference is here had to the covenant with Abraham; the very language of that covenant is adopted, and if it does not comprehend whatever is essential in the covenant of grace, it is hard to conceive in what terms that covenant should be expressed. What can we desire or imagine more on the part of the Almighty,

than for him to *be a God unto his people;* and on their part, what can they promise more, than is implied in an oath of allegiance and fidelity to him? Such was the transaction at this time between him and them, and in this transaction, little children are expressly mentioned as bearing their part. In opposition to such abundant evidence, is it not strange that any, who profess a reverence for the scriptures, should affect to represent infants as incapable of church membership, of sustaining a covenant relation to God, and of receiving the seal of his covenant?

Knowing that the divine promises were not limited to themselves, but extended to their offspring, the pious patriarchs not only committed their children to God by faith and prayer, but, putting their hands upon them, solemnly blessed them in the name of the Lord. Being thus included in the covenant made with their parents, the children of his professing people are expressly claimed by God as his *own* in a peculiar sense; and when the Israelites, in their apostacy, led their children to the

altar of idols, they are charged with the guilt of alienating the Lord's propriety. "Thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto *me*, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured—thou hast slain *my* children." Ezekiel xvi. This language is not used with reference to the offspring of heathen parents. From them the seed of of Israel are also distinguished by manifold promises. It is said, *all thy children shall be taught of God—The Lord shall circumcise their heart—They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's* &c. In the writings of the prophets, numerous passages occur which foretel a variety of blessings and privileges in store for the children of God's people. On these principles, the psalmist calls children *an heritage of the Lord,* and speaks of them as given for the increase and replenishing of the church, as well as for the comfort of their parents. The seed of the righteous are pronounced *blessed,* are called *God's servants,* as well as *his* children; and are

required by Joel, to appear in Zion before him, *even the children that suck the breast.* A child at the breast is represented as *hoping in God,* and as *cast upon him from the womb.* To *one*, God says, *before thou camest forth from the womb I sanctified thee ;* concerning *another*, an angel from heaven testified, that *he should be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb.*

It is certain that, from the beginning of those dispensations towards mankind, which are carried on through a mediator down to the coming of the Messiah, children were uniformly considered and treated as members of God's church, by his authority constituted such, included in the covenant with their parents, and received the seal of that covenant, *the seal of the righteousness of faith.* Our Baptist brethren have turned them out of God's church, and out of his covenant, and declared that no seal of the covenant shall be given them any longer. Ought they not to shew by what authority they do this, and who gave them this authority ? They are accustomed to demand

of us an explicit warrant for our conduct; but where do they find any shadow of a warrant for turning out of God's church those brought in by his command? Had any thing in the doctrine or conduct of the apostles, at the first publication of the gospel, been understood as excluding children from being numbered among the subjects of Christ's kingdom, from membership in his church, and from the seal of it in baptism, is it not utterly incredible that so great an alteration, with respect to the constituent members of the church, should not have been explicitly recorded? Had the friends of christianity been silent, its enemies, most surely, would have proclaimed it throughout the earth. How eagerly would the great body of the Jewish nation have lain hold on such an handle, to excuse their rejection of the gospel. Those of them, who received it, were extremely reluctant to part with circumcision, even after they knew baptism to be substituted in its place; and had not this latter rite been applied to their children, as well as to themselves, they would have been still

more tenacious of the former. Nay, we can hardly suppose that any considerations would have induced them to drop it. The probability is, that they would sooner have joined the general opposition against the gospel. The idea of seeing their children stript of privileges which they had hitherto always enjoyed, would have been so universally offensive to the Jews, that perhaps scarcely an individual of that nation would have embraced christianity. Their unbelieving priests and rulers would not have failed to take the advantage of so plausible and popular an objection against the gospel. They knew the tenour of the Abrahamic covenant, and gloried in the privileges derived from it to themselves and to their children. If any thing in the doctrine of the apostles could have been construed as a diminution of those privileges; if it could have been objected that, by embracing christianity, their infant offspring would be obviously in a worse condition than they were under the law, would even lose the seal of God's covenant and be cast out of his church; they surely

would have made this the subject of general and vehement clamour against the gospel. Nor could the apostles have hoped for success in preaching it to the Jews, unless they first removed so great and dangerous a stumbling block. But neither in their speeches nor writings, nor in any ancient author, do we find the most distant hint of any such objection, either as advanced by the enemies, or as obviated by the friends of the gospel. We conclude, therefore, that no room for such an objection was ever given by the apostles. On the contrary, their writings abound with passages which cannot be understood but on the principle of infants being included in the covenant made with their parents, and thereby entitled to the seal of it in baptism.

The covenant made with believers under the gospel is, in Romans iv. and Galatians iii. represented as essentially the same with that of Abraham of old. On this ground the blessing of Abraham is said to come upon the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; and christians are called the children of

Abraham, and heirs with him, to the same promise or covenant which, the apostle says, *God confirmed in Christ*, and which could not be disannulled or vacated by the law four hundred and thirty years after. The ceremonial and typical institutions of this law were given to assist the faith of God's people in looking forward to the coming of *the promised seed* in whom they would have their accomplishment, and, of course, be abolished. Through the duration of these ritual institutions, the covenant with Abraham continued, and after their abolition, remained the same that it was before. It descended with all its privileges to the christian church. *If ye are Christ's*, says the apostle, *then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.* As the promise was to him and his seed, so it is now to christians and their offspring. This is asserted by St. Peter, Acts ii. 38, 39, where he thus exhorts his awakened hearers, " Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost ; for *the promise is*

unto you and your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." That the covenant with Abraham is here meant by *the promise*, will appear highly probable if we consider how frequently this covenant is, by way of eminence, so styled ; but what sets Peter's meaning beyond a doubt, is his own explanation of it, in Acts iii. 25, where, addressing the same hearers on the same subject, he urges this argument, *Ye are the children of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham*, &c. His reminding them here of their being the children of Abraham's covenant, is of the same purport with what he had before said of the *promise being to them and their children.* Taking the promise then as referring to the covenant with Abraham, let us attend to Peter's argument in this exhortation, *repent and be baptized ; for the promise is unto you and your children.* The promise in the covenant with Abraham being unto them, is here urged as a reason why they should be baptized ; but as the same promise is extended to their children, it is

a reason equally good for the baptism of their children. As Jews, the present auditors, with their families, had hitherto been members of the church of God as it had subsisted under the dispensation of Moses; but as it was for the future to subsist under that of Christ, they, with their children, are exhorted to be baptized into the name of Christ, in token of their relation to the church under its present new form. To them, as the natural seed of Abraham, these gospel privileges were first tendered; but as the offer of them would soon be extended to those as yet *afar off*, and the blessing of Abraham would come upon the Gentiles, to the latter when thus called, the same promise would apply, furnishing a reason for the baptism of believing Gentiles and their offspring. To every man, whether Jew or Gentile, on his exercising the faith of Abraham, this promise is sure, *I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee.* Of course, the seal or token of the divine promise, whether it be circumcision as under the law; or baptism, as under the gospel, belongs as really to

the infant offspring of the believing parent as to the parent himself.

This constitution of the covenant of grace under the gospel, is confirmed by the strain of reasoning in Romans xi. There the church is represented under the figure of a good olive tree, and the Jews as its natural branches. When some of these branches were broken off for their unbelief, the Gentile converts, by nature a wild and foreign growth, are spoken of as grafted in among the remaining believing Jews, and with them *partaking of the root and fatness of the olive tree*—enjoying the privileges of God's ancient covenant with Abraham, who is here represented as the *root* or patriarch of the church, and all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, as his children or branches from him. And *if the root be holy*, says the apostle, *so are the branches.* In consequence of their connection with it, the branches are considered as sharing in the holiness of the root. If this were true with respect to the Jews, the natural children of Abraham, it must be equally true with respect to his adopted children. The

latter being graffed into the same stock, partake of *its root and fatness*, of every privilege indulged to the natural seed of old; and as the covenant with them included their offspring, so are the children of christian parents included in the covenant with them. If they, as the root, be holy, so are their children as branches from such a root.

An exemplification of this truth occurs in 1 Cor. vii. 14. where the apostle decides on the case of those children but one of whose parents is a believer: He determines that the federal holiness of the believing wife or husband, descends to their common issue, and that such children are to be reckoned, not as *unclean*, but *holy*, not common as the heathen, but *Saints* on account of their covenant relation to God and membership in his church. The word *holy*, in this text, is elsewhere generally translated *Saints*, the common appellation by which the members of Christ's church are distinguished throughout the New Testament. As the children of believers have the appellation of *Saints* from St.

Paul, so they have that of *disciples* from St. Peter in Acts xv. 10. *why tempt ye God, to put a yoke on the neck of the disciples?* The yoke here principally intended was circumcision, which the Judaizing christians attempted to impose on the children of the believing Gentiles. By calling these children *disciples*, Peter recognizes their relation to Christ. *Saints* or *disciples* always denote persons belonging to the church, and entitled to its distinguishing rites and privileges. It would be easy to multiply quotations from the speeches and writings of the apostles, in which they appear uniformly to consider the offspring of believers as included in the profession of their parents, and with them numbered among the peculiar people of God.

But had the apostles been silent upon the subject, the declaration of our Saviour in the text, with the circumstances attending it, is, in my view, decisive. After he has, with his own gracious lips, so expressly encouraged their dedication to him; in so pointed a manner testified his displeasure at an attempt to keep them from him, and

in terms so explicit declared, *of such is the kingdom of heaven*; there can be no room to doubt of his acceptance when, in holy baptism, we present our tender babes as the lambs of his flock, to this great Shepherd of the sheep. Do our baptist brethren tell us, that all our Lord meant on this occasion was, that his kingdom consists of adult persons, who, in meekness and humility, are like children? Why then, we ask, may not his kingdom consist of children themselves, whom these adult persons are thus required to be like? But if he had aimed at nothing more than teaching a lesson of humility, there could have been no reason for his displeasure against the disciples for keeping little children from him. Lambs and doves might have answered his purpose just as well; and these, as often as infants, are mentioned in scripture as emblems of the innocence, meekness and humility which ought to adorn the lives of christians. But would Christ have taken lambs and doves *into his arms, laid his hands upon them, and blessed them*, and said, *of such is the kingdom of heaven?*

It seems, by his manner of receiving these infants, as if he meant to satisfy his followers through every age, that they are to be considered as his subjects, and the heirs of his grace. Towards whom did he ever give more expressive tokens of his favour? The *blessing* was always accounted a sacred thing in the church. *The laying on of hands* was used in the consecration of ministers, and also for the communication of the Holy Spirit. It was indeed one of the very last tokens of acknowledgment which the disciples received from their Master, at the moment of his parting from them, and ascension into heaven. Yet, with each of these solemn forms did he own little children as his, and consecrate them to himself—at the same time adding, as a further rebuke upon the disciples for seeming to think them incapable of the blessings of his kingdom, *Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein*: As if he had said, "you seem to stand upon distinctions, and to think of qualifications as entitling

you to the privileges of my kingdom ; but, be it known to you, that the very best of you are as far from having any thing to recommend you to these privileges as little infants ; and if you receive them at all, it must be in the same way in which they are extended to them, by the free gift of God."

On another occasion, mentioned by three of the evangelists, we find him noticing young children, and speaking of them in a most remarkable manner. Having taken one up into his arms, he said, *Whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth me.—It is not the will of your Father who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.—The Son of man is come to save that which was lost.—Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones ; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.* I know not how others may understand this language of our Saviour, but to me, it sounds as pointedly against the principles and practice of our Baptist brethren as though it had been de-

signed for an express warning against their mistakes. Can we, my hearers, doubt whether it be the will of the second Adam, the covenant Head of all the redeemed, that the children of his people should be baptized into his name, after we have seen and contemplated him in the attitude in which he is here exhibited, holding a little child in his arms, and declaring it not to be the will of his heavenly Father that any such little one should perish; that though all be in danger through the original apostacy, yet *since the Son of man is come to save that which was lost*, he, in special, claims little children as the objects of his redemption, and having a peculiar affection for them, requires them to be received, acknowledged, and treated as his members; hereby promising that any kindnesses rendered to them for his sake, shall be accepted and rewarded as done to himself; and solemnly cautioning his disciples, and through them, all others, against overlooking, neglecting, or in any way despising such little ones; for as his members, they are the charge of those exalted beings who

stand in the presence of God, and have the angels of heaven for their guardians ?

These ideas of the discipleship of little children, and of the estimation in which they are held by Christ, taught by himself in the course of his personal ministry, may assist us in understanding his final commission to his apostles, directing them, by the rite of baptism, to enrol all nations in the number of his visible subjects : *Go ye and teach* (the import of the Greek word is *disciple* or *proselyte*) *all nations baptizing them.* Could these orders be fulfilled without the admission of infants into the church ? Do not children form a numerous and important part of every nation ? Are they not always included in the meaning of the word ? Does not the term, in every language, comprehend both sexes, and every age ; from an infant of a day to the hoary head ? Is it conceivable that the apostles, after having so repeatedly seen little children in the gracious arms of their Saviour, again and again witnessed the tender expressions of his favour and affection towards them, been themselves

the objects of his displeasure, and suffered his rebuke for keeping them from him, heard him solemnly pronouncing them *his* subjects, and declaring that *whoever receiveth them in his name*, receiveth him;— after all this, is it conceivable that when they admitted parents into the number of visible disciples, they should reject their infant offspring, and withhold from them the discriminating seal of discipleship? Being commanded to baptize all nations, would they have denied baptism to the children in every nation? They knew what the tenor of God's covenant had always been, that when of old, *the gospel was preached unto Abraham*, its promise was to him and his seed, his whole family being interested in it, and distinguished by its appointed token; that thus, in the line of his descendants, children continued to be included in the covenant with their parents, from generation to generation, down to the present time. They also knew that when any of the heathen were proselyted to the religion of the Jews, the children of such proselytes were always included in the pro-

fession of their parents, and by circumcision and the other rites then in use, became as regular members of the Jewish church as the children of Jews themselves. When therefore the period arrived for extending to all the families of the earth, privileges which had hitherto been peculiar to the family of Abraham, and the apostles were commissioned for the purpose ; must they not have concluded that according to all former usage, the children of those other families were to be proselyted with their parents ?

It will be said, that instruction precedes baptism. With respect to adults, this is so far true, that there must be a professed willingness to receive instruction. Such a willingness, however, seems to have been the only pre-requisite deemed necessary by the apostles. When any hearer of the gospel was so far convinced of its truth as to express a willingness to enter the school of Christ in order to further instruction, he was, by baptism, forthwith so entered and put upon the list of disciples. This is the precise meaning of the command to *disciple*

or *proselyte*. It was thus that the apostles fulfilled their commission. They persuaded as many as possible, in this way, to become disciples. The multitudes baptized on the very day on which they began to be instructed, must have been, with respect to christian knowledge, but babes indeed. Thus, however, they, and with them their children, were put in the way to learn. The latter, according to their age and standing, and with respect to what the christian covenant required of them, might be as perfect as their parents. Christians comparatively the most eminent, are but learners: they know but in part, and are sanctified but in part. The grades in Christ's school are various, and proportioned to the ages, capacities and opportunities of all the scholars, from the infant to the old man, and from the newly converted pagan to the learned rabbi in Israel. The baptists confidently pronounce young children incapable of the qualifications of Christ's disciples. Their modesty would be more apparent in submitting to *his* judgment; and justness of observation might lead them to

a better opinion of the capacities and early improvements of children. After their birth, not many weeks, perhaps not many days pass, before they begin to learn. Though it may be some time before they will be able to understand the christian doctrines, yet, favoured with the tuition of christian parents, and constantly experiencing a christian treatment, they may very early possess the very temper of Christ's subjects.

But admitting that in early infancy children are incapable of instruction, this can be no argument against their being made disciples. Thus they are entered into Christ's school, and destined to learn of him. When it has been agreed to send a child to any particular master, he is thereupon called the scholar of that master, though as yet he has not begun to learn. In Numbers iii. 28, we thus read with reference to the Kohathites, "In the number of all the males, from a month old and upward, were eight thousand and six hundred, *keeping the charge of the sanctuary.*" If Jewish infants of a month old, might be,

not only the disciples of Moses, but officers under him, *keepers* of the charge of the sanctuary, why may not christian infants be the disciples of Christ?—God promised Abraham, *in thy seed shall all nations be blessed.* In fulfilment of the promise, Christ commanded his apostles, *to disciple all nations, baptizing them.* Will any undertake to prove that neither in the promise, nor in the command, the word *nations* includes children? Had the command been as the Jewish zealots at Antioch understood it, Acts xv. that all nations were *to be circumcised after the manner of Moses,* every one would have supposed that children were included. Why then should not this be supposed, when the same purpose is to be answered by baptism? This latter rite was not, in that age, a novelty. Of the whole congregation of Israel, upon their first entering into covenant with God after their exit from Egypt, St. Paul says, that "They were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." From ancient writers, both Jewish and Christian, it appears that in conformity to this original

baptism of their whole nation, the Jews were accustomed to baptize their proselytes; and that on such occasions, the whole family of the proselyte, as included in his profession, were baptized with him. When John the baptist was asked, "Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not the Christ?" the question implies that, as their nation of old had been baptized unto Moses, so the Jews expected that, at the coming of the Messiah, they would be again baptized as proselytes to him. When, therefore, the apostles were sent forth for this purpose, would they not be led by the prior use of baptism, to apply it to children with their parents?

Our brethren ask, "can infants repent and believe?" They might, with as much reason, ask, Can infants be saved? These conditions of adult baptism are also the express conditions of salvation. But if the salvation of an infant depends not upon these conditions, no more does his baptism. Our Saviour has taught us, that none can be saved but those *who are born of water and of the Spirit*. In hope that our infants

may be born of the Spirit, we wash them with water. But to pretend that they ought not to be so washed, because they cannot believe, is as absurd as it would be to pretend that they ought not to *eat* because they cannot *work*.—What are the excellencies of faith and repentance that, by virtue of these qualifications recently obtained, adults only should be considered as meet for discipleship to the exclusion of unoffending infants? When an old sinner laments that hitherto he has lived worse than in vain, that his whole life has passed in *treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath;* does this his repentance render him more worthy of a relation to Christ, than they are who have never offended? If, by faith and repentance through the infinite grace of the gospel, the spots of such leopards may be washed out, the sable hue of such Ethiops may be changed; is it not supposable that to a holy God, new born infants, just emerged from *his* forming hand and free from all actual guilt, when presented in baptism by christian parents, may be an offering full as acceptable? Why

should they not be thus offered? If parents belong to the number of Christ's visible sheep, why should they not bring their lambs into the same fold with themselves, to feed in the same pasture, and be under the care and guardianship of the same divine Shepherd?

To me, it is matter of admiration how any can seriously doubt whether children were, in fact, thus introduced by the apostles, when we find that of six baptisms recorded as administered by St. Paul, three of them were so many households, that of Stephenas, of Lydia, and of the jailer. The circumstances of the two last are particularly related; and from the relation it appears that each of these families were baptized on the professed faith of their respective heads, there being no intimation of any profession on the part of the other members. If children, in all ages, were to be excluded from the ordinance, is it not astonishing that the Holy Ghost, under whose guidance the scriptures were written, should have used a term which naturally leads every unprejudiced reader immediately

to think of children? Not only in common speech, but throughout the Bible, the word *household* suggests the idea of children. When Pharaoh invited Joseph's brethren to bring their *households* into Egypt, they thereupon carried their wives and their *little ones*, Genesis xlvi. 5. When, in 1 Timothy, iii. 4. St. Paul says, "A bishop must rule well his own house or household (for it is the same word,) this explanation follows, "having his *children* in subjection with all gravity." The baptism of households, then, unquestionably implies that of children, together with that of other young persons belonging to the family in the condition of servants.

You will not wonder, my hearers, that similar instances of the baptism of children occur not more frequently in the Acts of the apostles, or that more upon the subject is not found in their speeches and writings, when you shall reflect that at the commencement of christianity, the great and immediate object was, to proselyte adults. If householders could be brought over to the faith, none, in that age, doubted

of their families. The ideas entertained by the ancients, of the oneness of a man's family with himself, of his authority over them, and responsibility for them, were much higher and more strict, than those which prevail in modern times. By the laws of Romulus, children were placed under the unlimited control and at the absolute disposal of their parents; and by the laws of Moses, they were so far considered as the property of the father that, if he became a bankrupt, they were liable to be seized among his other effects, and sold into slavery, or retained in bondage to the creditor. It was therefore taken for granted universally, both among Jews and Gentiles, that all the branches of a family were included in the profession of its head. When parents embraced christianity, and submitted to baptism, that of their children followed as a thing of course. As this accorded with the sense of all men, and with the customs and usages universally predominant in that age, and was never once called in question, there was no occa-

sion for any particular statement upon the subject.

Our baptist brethren endeavour to evade the force of all our arguments by urging, that, "no persons are the proper subjects of a positive institute who are not expressly mentioned in the institute itself." But do they, in other respects, adhere to this rule? I charitably suppose that those of them who are seriously religious, make conscience of keeping holy the first day of the week; but where has Christ or his apostles said, "Thou shalt remember the first day of the week to keep it holy?" They admit females to the Lord's table; but where is it said, "Let women, as well as men, do this in remembrance of me?" I am far from intimating that they are wrong in these observances; but surely there is as much evidence from scripture to prove that we are right in the baptism of infants. Indeed, with respect to this ordinance of baptism, they require the immersion of the whole body, and deny baptism in every other form; but where do they find the divine injunction, "Thou shalt baptize by

immersion only?" If they think two or three words, vaguely and incorrectly translated, to be an authority equivalent to a command; we think that we have produced incomparably better, more substantial and satisfactory proofs of the discipleship of infants, of their being included in the covenant with their parents, and of their scripture right to the seal of that covenant. They were thus included in it from its first proposal to an apostate world. By the express command of God, they received the external token of the covenant from the days of Abraham down to the coming of our Saviour. This covenant constituted the church and kingdom of God, of which the Israelites were members and subjects. Its outward form and rites have been changed, but the qualifications of its subjects have been always the same. The prophets and apostles were all members and ministers of the same church. When, for their rejection of the Messiah, the kingdom of God was taken from the Jews, and given to the Gentiles, the transfer made no alteration with respect to what

is required in its subjects. The gospel is but an illustration and fulfilment of God's promise in his covenant with Abraham, *in thy seed shall all nations be blessed.* For the carrying of this promise into effect, the apostles were sent forth to *disciple all nations, baptizing them.* Authorized by this commission, they proclaimed the promise of grace as extending to children, with their parents, and baptized the families of believers, expressly declaring their children as theirs, to be *saints.* While these truths are prominent in the word of God, there can be no reason to scruple the lawfulness of infant baptism. However faulty our churches may be in other respects, yet in this question, we have the scriptures, as well as antiquity, and all the national churches in Christendom, on our side.

As the mode of baptism by immersion, and the exclusion of infants from the ordinance, are two distinct questions, having no apparent connection with each other, and draw after them trains of arguments equally separate and distinct ; it seems somewhat singular and unaccountable that

these two points, so dissimilar in themselves; should have been, for more than two centuries past, uniformly associated in the minds of a particular sect of christians. It affords some room, at least, for suspicion that their opinions are formed not from evidence alone. I would not, however, be understood as insinuating that there are no sincere christians among them. I rather hope that there may be some such among each of the denominations in Christendom, and should rejoice to see all these different persuasions mutually extending their christian charity towards each other. This would be a substantial proof of the reality of their religion. *By this*, says our Saviour, "Shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another."

The spirit of division and separation, which so generally marks those of the Baptist persuasion, is most opposite to that of christian charity. Their excluding all other christians from fellowship with them, savours not a little of the spirit of those ancient hypocrites who said, "stand by thyself, come not near me; for I am holier

than thou." The very plea which they offer as an excuse for this conduct, is, in itself, a further expression of an assuming and arrogant spirit. "Ye have not been baptized," say they, "therefore we cannot commune with you." Thus they *judge their brethren*, deny their baptism, and *set them at nought* as unchristened heathens. By excluding us from the table of the Lord, they implicitly tell us that we cannot share with them in a crucified Saviour. *Christ is not divided*, nor has he two tables, one for them and another for us. By engrossing it to themselves, they treat us as outcasts. When men have been once plunged, they seem to be incurably baptized into this uncharitableness, into a sect or party, rather than into that religion which is intended for all nations, which breathes peace on earth and universal good will. In direct opposition to this spirit of the gospel, they in this place, who have lately gone over to the Baptist persuasion, have thereupon withdrawn themselves from this house of worship, from the word and sacraments here administered, from all connection with

this christian assembly, and are now setting up altar against altar. Thus schism, with all its attendant evils, has taken place. Could the great enemy of Christ and his church have hit upon a project more effectual for the subversion of the general interests of religion? A house or a kingdom divided against itself, cannot stand. Of all the duties enjoyned upon us in the gospel, are there any upon which greater stress is laid, or more precepts and exhortations given, than upon those of peace and union, brotherly love and mutual charity? "Behold, how good, and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Addressing himself to the Corinthians, St. Paul says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that there be no divisions among you." To the christians at Rome, disputing about religious ceremonies, he continues through the whole of the 14th. and part of the 15th. chapter of his epistle, to urge them to a mutual charity, notwithstanding their different sentiments. With all his apostolic authority he enjoins it upon each party to

receive one another as brethren in good standing. He clearly teaches the right of private judgment, and that no man ought to be censured for doing or not doing what he either does or forbears to do from a principle of obedience to the divine will. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?" To his own master he standeth or falleth. In matters of conscience, we are accountable to God only. *Let every man*, therefore, *be fully persuaded in his own mind.* While our brethren are left in the full enjoyment of this liberty, what just cause can they have for separation? If with their new ideas of baptism, they have also obtained new hearts and right spirits; by continuing here, with these newly acquired principles of grace and holiness, manifesting themselves in every good word and work, how much evil might have been prevented, and how greatly might the general interests of religion be advanced by shining examples of the power of Godliness! To the peace and welfare of the town, to the interests of civil society, as well as to those of religion, continued union would

be exceedingly beneficial. For what are all these signal advantages sacrificed? Can any believe that, with such sacrifices, the God of Peace and the Prince of Peace, are well pleased? Throughout the New Testament, schism appears in the catalogue of the most grievous sins, is branded as the fruit of the carnal and fleshly mind, and the authors and abettors of it are represented as dangerous associates, whom all serious christians are required most heedfully to shun. The eminently pious, as well as learned *Baxter*, who, in his day is said to have written more books against the Baptists, than any other British author, gives it as his judgment, that their spirit of separation is the most dangerous of all their errors. "I am not," says he "half so zealous to turn men from the opinions of the Anabaptists, as I am to persuade both them and others, to live together in mutual love and church communion, notwithstanding such differences." While we continue to lament what was so sincerely lamented by all good men; let it be our care, my brethren, so to conduct ourselves,

that if offences come, we may not be the faulty cause; and may the spirit of truth preserve us from every false way, and teach us how to walk so as to please God!

THE END.

J. G. Barnard, Printer, Skinner-Street, London.

A

CHURCH OF GOD

DESCRIBED;

THE

QUALIFICATIONS

FOR MEMBERSHIP STATED;

AND

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

ILLUSTRATED;

IN TWO DISCOURSES.

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THE

NATURE AND DESIGN

OF A

CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

I Corin. i. 2.

Unto the Church of God, which is at Corinth; to them who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

THAT we may better understand the apostle's idea of a church of God, we must bear in mind that the Corinthians, before the gospel was preached among them, were "Gentiles carried away unto dumb idols, even as they were led. Those of them who received the doctrine preached by the apostles, renounced the idolatrous

forms and places of worship, and united together to worship God through Jesus Christ, in the manner which the gospel prescribes. *These* are called *a church*, which in the original language, properly signifies a *select company*, or an assembly called forth from the rest of mankind for some particular purpose, more especially for the purpose of religious worship. The church in Corinth was that number of persons, who had come out from among their idolatrous fellow citizens for the true worship of God in Christ.

The apostle describes them, "as sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called to be saints." We cannot suppose that by this description he intended to represent *all* the members of the Corinthian church to be *gracious*, *godly* persons: many passages, in this and his second epistle to them, import that he thought otherwise; but these phrases rather signify, that they had been called out of the world, and separated from others, that they might be a peculiar people to God. *They were called to be holy.* The words, *sanctified*, *saints*, and *holy*, applied to bodies of men, are usually

to be taken in the same general sense, as *christians, disciples*, and *brethren;* to express their *visible* relation and *professed* character, rather than a certain judgment concerning their habitual temper. The sabbath, the temple, its utensils, and the ground on which it stood, are called *holy*, and said to be *sanctified*, because they were separated from a common to a sacred use. The nation of the Jews, in which, at its best state, were great numbers of ungodly men, is called holy, as being separated from other nations, for the service of the true God. Moses says. "Ye are a holy people to the Lord, a peculiar treasure, a kingdom of priests." So the christian church is called "A chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people." The word *saints*, in many places stands opposed, not to unsound Christians, but to the heathen world, particularly in the passages which speak of persecution against the *saints*, of ministering to the *saints*, and of distributing to the necessities of the *saints*; and in that remarkable passage which denominates the children of a believer *holy*, in

distinction from the children of the unbelieving, who are called *unclean.*

The apostle farther describes the Corinthian church, as consisting of those who "call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ;" who own him to be their Lord and Saviour, profess to hope for salvation through him and worship God in his name.

He directs his epistle "To all, who, in every place, call on the name of Christ Jesus the Lord, both theirs and ours." In this address, he signifies, that there is a sacred relation subsisting among all Christians in every place, and that, as they profess subjection to one common Lord, so they ought to maintain communion one with another.

The words of our text will naturally lead us to consider,

I. The *nature* of a church of God.

II. The *end* of its institution.

III. The relation which *children* bear to it.

IV. The *qualifications* requisite for admission into it. And,

V. The *fellowship*, which ought to subsist among its members.

I. We are to consider the *nature* of a church of God.

Its general nature, as a select company, called forth from the world, for the worship and service of God, we have already stated in the opening of our text. Some further illustrations, however, will be necessary.

The church is sometimes distinguished into the *invisible* and the *visible* church. By the *invisible* church, is intended the whole number of real saints in all places and ages; the whole family in Heaven and earth; those whom Christ will gather together in one body in Heaven. This is that MOUNT ZION, THE CITY OF THE LIVING GOD, THE HEAVENLY JERUSALEM, which consists of an innumerable company of angels, the spirits of just men made perfect, and the general assembly and church of the first born, who were enrolled in Heaven. By the *visible* church are meant all those who have been visibly dedicated to God in Christ, and have not, by infidelity, heresy, or scandal, cut themselves off from the

society of Christians; or, in the words of our apostle, "All who, in every place, call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord."

The visible church is again distinguished into the *catholic* or *general* church, and into *local* or *particular* churches. The word is often used to denote all the *professed* people of God in all nations and ages. In this large sense it is to be understood, when Christ is said to be made head of the church, and the church is described as subject to him. The whole Jewish nation, which was chosen of God, to be a peculiar people to himself, is called *the church.* It is said of Moses, "He was in the church in the wilderness."

When this people, by their great and increasing corruption, were ripening apace for destruction, God sent his own Son, the promised Redeemer to rescue from ruin his sinking church, and place it on a larger and surer establishment. By his teaching, and the ministry of his apostles, who were trained up under his immediate discipline, a considerable number of subjects were gained over to his kingdom, while he was

on earth. Just before his ascension, he gave these apostles a commission to go forth, and spread his doctrine, and collect subjects among all nations. His church, which before stood on the foundation of the prophets, now stands on the foundation of the apostles also, he himself being the corner stone, in which both parts of the foundation meet and are united. The church was formerly limited to one nation, but now it is indiscriminately extended to all. In the city of Jerusalem there were many, who, before the descent of the Holy Ghost, consorted for the worship of God in Christ. To these were soon added multitudes, who continued in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers. They were called *the church.* After the gospel was spread to such an extent, that it was no longer possible for all the believers to attend the worship of God in the same place, particular religious societies, in divers places, were formed for the convenience of worship, each of which had the name of *a church.*

These societies of Christians, united in

different places for mutual edification in the joint worship of God, are what we mean by *particular* churches, in distinction from the *catholic* or *universal* church. Thus the Christians in Corinth, those in Galatia, those in Ephesus, those in Thessalonica, are called *a church.* But as all these particular churches received the same gospel, maintained the same form of worship, and professed subjection to the same Lord, so they are often considered as *one* church. Though we read of many churches, yet these are only so many different parts of the same universal church. They are members of the same great body, apartments of the same house, provinces of the same empire. With regard to their several jurisdictions and places of worship, they are distinct; but yet one in the main, as they call on the same Jesus, their common Saviour and Lord.

As there was in the apostolic times, so there is now, frequent occasion for new churches to be formed. But from the preceding observations, it appears, that whenever a new church is erected, careful regard

should be had to her communion with other churches, as well as to the communion of her own members among themselves; otherwise the body of Christ is divided, and the bond of peace is broken.

Among the members of every particular church, there is always supposed to be a solemn covenant and agreement to walk together in the commands and ordinances of Christ, to watch over one another in meekness and love, and to be fellow-helpers to the kingdom of God. The church in Corinth is said to *come together into one place.* The church in Jerusalem is cautioned *not to forsake the assembling of themselves together;* and required, to *exhort one another, and to consider one another, that they may provoke to love and to good works.* And Christians are enjoined to *be subject one to another.*

The covenant between the members of a particular church, to walk together in the ordinances of Christ, is of sacred obligation; and when any of them have occasion to remove to another church, they should do it in a manner consistent with Christian

order, peace and communion. When a number of Christians unite in a new church, still they must consider themselves as members of the general body, and seek not merely their own profit but the profit of many.

II. The *end* for which a church was instituted, and the purpose for which we are called into it, is what we proposed, in the second place, to consider.

Christ's kingdom is not of this world. As the nature, so the design of it is purely spiritual; it is, that in the enjoyment of suitable means we may be trained up in knowledge and holiness; and thus formed to a meetness for future glory.

It is said, *the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.* This is not to be understood as importing, that all who joined themselves to the church were finally saved. There were in that, as there are in all ages, many who call Christ their Lord, and eat and drink in his presence, but still are workers of iniquity. But they are called *the saved,* because they are admitted to the offers and means of salvation. In

this sense also, baptism is said to *save* us; not as conveying an immediate right to salvation, but as being the appointed way of introduction into the visible church, where the means of salvation are afforded. In the same sense we are to understand those passages, where salvation is promised to whole families on the faith of the head. Not that *his* faith entitles *them* to eternal life, but that it brings them into the visible church, and to the enjoyment of the means of salvation. "Noah, by faith, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; the like figure whereunto, even baptism doth now save us."

As without holiness, none can be admitted into God's heavenly kingdom, "Christ gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." The church, in our text, is described, as consisting of those *who are called to be holy*. Christ has set in

his church, teachers for her edification, " that we might all come in the unity of faith and knowledge, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; and professing the truth in love, might grow up in to him in all things."

Love is a most important branch of gospel holiness. Christians " are chosen in Christ, that they might be holy and without blame before him in love; and might purify their souls in obeying the truth, through the spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren." Christ has, therefore, appointed that his disciples, dwelling together in social connection, and maintaining fellowship in religious duties, should increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men. They are directed " to forbear one another in love, and keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, because there is one body," or church, of which they are all members, and " one spirit, one Lord, one faith, and one baptism." In order to their enjoying the grace of God, for their increase and edification, they must, like the parts of a

building, be "fitly framed into each other, and be builded together for an habitation of God through the spirit."

Having illustrated the nature and design of a church of God, we will now attend to the next proposed inquiry.

III. What relation *children* bear to the church?

This will be necessary, previously to our stating the qualifications of adult proselytes.

When first the apostles went forth to preach the gospel, and erect churches in the world, mankind in general were in a state of *heathenism*, or *judaism;* and, either had not heard of the gospel, or did not believe it to be divine. From among these, were they to make proselytes to Christianity.

What they required of the proselytes, whom they admitted into the church of God, was a professed belief that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. This profession of faith in Christ necessarily implied a promise of obedience to him.

Now as the apostles admitted adult pro-

selytes into the church by baptism, so there is sufficient ground to believe, that they admitted to this ordinance the children of proselytes, in token of God's merciful regard to them, and of their parents' obligation to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. In this general sense, the baptised offspring of believers are within the church; having God's covenant seal upon them, and being under the care of those who have covenanted to bring them up for him.

As many as are comprehended within God's covenant, and are the subjects of its gracious promises, undeniably belong to the church; for this is founded on the covenant. That the children of professed believers are within the covenant, is evident from passages of scripture, too numerous to be here particularly recited. The promise to Abraham was made also to his infant seed, who were to receive the seal and token of the promise, as well as he; and as many as received it not, were said to have broken God's covenant; and these were to be cut off, or excluded from among

their people. Had they not been within the covenant, and among the people of God, their want of the seal could not have been a breach of the covenant, or the ground of an exclusion from the people. Moses says to the congregation of Israel, "Ye stand all of you before the Lord your God; all the men of Israel, your little ones and your wives; that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, that he may establish thee for a people to himself, as he hath sworn to Abraham." Express promises are made to children, as the seed of those who are in covenant, particularly the promise of God's word, and of his spirit. "God established a testimony in Jacob, which he commanded the fathers, that they should make it known to their children, that the generation to come might also know it." "Circumcision has much the advantage every way, chiefly because to them are committed the oracles of God." "To Jacob his servant, and to Israel his chosen, God promises, I will pour my spirit on thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring, and they shall spring up

as among the grass, and as willows by the water-courses." This is God's covenant with them who turn from transgression in Jacob. "My spirit which is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed." Infants are called the children of the church; and the gentiles are described in prophecy, as coming to the church with their children in their arms. *All these gather themselves together and come to thee;* to Zion, God's church, *they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.* The children of those who are in covenant, are distinguished from others as God's children, born unto him. God says to his ancient church, "I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine; but thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, which thou hast born unto me, and hast sacrificed them: thou hast slain my children." It is foretold, that in the time of the church's prosperity, "the people shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble, for they

are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them." The Redeemer is described by Isaiah, as one "who shall feed his flock like a shepherd, and shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom." When he appeared on earth, he commanded that children should be brought to him: those who were brought, he took into his arms, and blessed, declaring them subjects of his kingdom. But in what sense are they such, if they belong not to his church, but to the kingdom of Satan? When Christ instituted the ordinance of baptism, he pointed out the subjects of it in such general terms, as might naturally be supposed to include children; and his apostles, who knew how he had ever treated children, who had heard his directions concerning them, and who could not be ignorant, that, under former dispensations of the covenant, children were comprehended with their parents, must understand them to be included in this instruction, *disciple all nations, baptizing them.* Accordingly, in the first instance of their administering

baptism, after this commission, they placed the reason of it, and the right to it, on a basis which alike supports the baptism of believers, and of their children. "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost, for the promise is to you and to your children." They considered the children of believers as holy, in distinction from the children of unbelievers. And it appears to have been their practice, when they baptized a believing householder, to baptize also his household; those who were *his*, and under his government. And it is observable, that among all the instances of baptism, mentioned in the New Testament, we find not one baptized at adult age, who appears to have been born of Christian parents; but they were all proselytes from judaism, or from heathenism.

Our English word church, signifies the house, or family of the Lord. It is a well chosen word; for the church is often called, a *family* or *household*. But who needs to be told, that children are members of the family in which they are born? It is often

called a *city*, a *nation*, a *people*. But who ever imagined that these terms excluded children? If a city is incorporated are not children members of the corporation, as well as their parents? If a privilege is granted to a people, do not children become intitled to it. If a form of government is settled in a nation, do not children come under the form.

You will ask, how can children be brought within the church without their own consent? But as well may you ask, how should they be born under the gospel; or how should they be created rational beings, without their own consent? If it is a privilege to enjoy the example, instruction and prayers of good men, and to be placed under the care of those who are solemnly bound to give them a pious education, then it is a privilege to be born within the church, and to receive in childhood the seal of the covenant. And will any complain, that God bestows on them mercies, before they had consented to take them?

Certain religious duties are incumbent

on children, as soon as they arrive to a natural capacity to perform them. But has not God a right to enjoin such duties as his wisdom sees fit? Must he consult his creatures to know what laws he may make for them? Was not the covenant in the plains of Moab made with little ones, as well as with the men of Israel? With those who were not, as well as with those who were then present? Are there not moral obligations which result from our rational nature, and from our place in the creation, as well as from our special covenant relation to God? Shall we conclude that all these obligations are void, for want of our previous consent? To the validity of contracts between man and man, who stand on the foot of equality, mutual consent is necessary: But God is a sovereign, and 'his covenant he *commands* us.' When he promises us blessings, and enjoins duties as conditions of the blessings, he states to us the tenor of his covenant, and, by his supreme authority, brings us under the obligations of it, whether we have consented to it, or not.

Now if the children of believers are un-

der the covenant, and within the church of God, they ought to receive the seal and token of their relation to him; to be taught, as soon as they are able to understand, the nature of religion; and to be considered, when they come forward in life, as under the watch of the church. They should be nursed at her side; and when they have competency of knowledge, should be invited to her actual communion. If they behave in a manner unworthy of their relation, they should be treated with, and exhorted to repentance. If they prove contumacious and incorrigible, they are, after due patience, to be cut off from their people. Such appears to be the state of children.

IV. We proceed to inquire, what qualifications are requisite for the admission of adults into the church, and for their enjoyment of all gospel ordinances?

The question is twofold: *First*, What a church ought to require of those whom she admits to her communion? And, *Secondly*, What qualifications a person must find in himself to justify his coming to the communion?

The first question is, What a church ought to require of those whom she admits to her communion?

The answer in general is, She is to require the same as the apostles required.

Those whom the apostles admitted to fellowship with them in breaking of bread, and in prayer, being first instructed in the doctrines and evidences of Christianity, professed to believe, that *this* was a divine religion.

The Jews, who were baptized on the day of pentecost, gladly received the word of the gospel. The eunuch, who was baptized by Philip, declared his belief, that Jesus was the Son of God. The heart of Lydia was opened to attend to the doctrine of Paul; and she was judged faithful to the Lord. The jailor is said to have believed in God. When the people of Samaria believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, they were baptized, both men and women.

The churches were enjoined to put away from among them those wicked persons who would not be reclaimed. We may, there-

fore conclude, that such were not received without a profession of repentance.

A Christian church is, then, to require of those, whom she admits to her communion, these three things; a competent knowledge of the essential doctrines and precepts of religion; a professed belief of, and subjection to them; and a blameless conversation; or, where this had been wanting, a profession of repentance. These things are, in the nature of the case, necessary; for it is palpably absurd for a man to join himself to a Christian church, and attend upon its ordinances, unless he understands the nature, and believes the truth of that religion on which it is founded; and has such a sense of its importance, as to resolve that he will be governed by it. And every person of competent knowledge, a good profession, and a correspondent life, has a right, in the view of the church, to the enjoyment of gospel ordinances, whenever he claims it.

Whatever may be the opinion of a church, concerning the necessity of saving grace to qualify one, in the sight of God, for Christian communion, she cannot justly exclude

the person we have described; because a good profession, and a conversation agreeable to it, is all the evidence which she can have in his favour. She can judge the heart only by visible fruits. The controversy concerning the necessity of internal holiness, in the present case, can have no reference to the real practice of the church, in admitting members; for whether she judges this to be a necessary qualification or not, still she must conduct herself in the same manner, and admit the same persons. Namely, those, and only those, who have sufficient knowledge of the gospel, profess a belief of, and subjection to the gospel, and contradict not that profession by an ungodly conversation. She may, perhaps, think proper to require of her members a particular relation of their Christian experiences. But be this relation ever so full, still it is but the evidence of words—of a good profession. The real sincerity of the heart, after all, is known only to him, who seeth not as man seeth.

A church has no right, *on mere jealousy*, to exclude from her communion any one

who offers himself. She must first make it appear, that he is, by ignorance, heresy or wickedness, disqualified for communion. It is not incumbent on him to demonstrate his inward grace; but on the church to prove his want of it. The burden of proof, in this case, lies wholly on the church; not on the claimant. If one claims privileges, the church is not to reject him, in a sovereign, arbitrary manner, of her own will, without offering reasons: She is either to admit him, or shew cause why she refuses. If she shall convict him of any disqualification, still she is not to treat him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother: She is not to abandon him at once, but labour for his amendment. To reject claimants, in any other way, than by conviction on fair and open trial, is to set up a tyranny in the church, which Christ has no where warranted. It is to subvert that liberty with which Christ has made us free. The church ought to caution all against hypocrisy and dissimulation in their approaches to divine ordinances; but she is not to assume the judgment of men's hearts, rashly in-

truding into things, which she has not seen, and which belong only to God.

We are to aim at perfection, both as private christians, and as churches. But we are to pursue this aim in a scriptural way; not by usurping God's prerogative, or by excluding from our charity and fellowship, all who hope humbly and speak modestly; all who cannot give the highest proof of their godly sincerity; but by cleansing *ourselves* from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and by considering one another to provoke unto love and good works.

After all, there will be bad, as well as good, in christian societies. "The kingdom of heaven is like a net cast into the sea, which gathered of every kind; and when it was full, they drew it to shore, and gathered the good into vessels and cast the bad away. So shall it be in the end of the world; then the wicked shall be severed from among the just.

Having shewn what a church is to require of those whom she admits to her communion, we proceed to the second question.

What qualifications a person must find in

himself to justify him in entering into the church, and attending on all gospel ordinances?

That we may bring this question within a narrow compass, and reduce it to a single point, it will be necessary to remove some things, which have often been blended with it, and occasioned much confusion in thinking and arguing upon it.

1. The question is not, Whether every person educated under the gospel, is *in duty bound* to attend on all divine ordinances in some Christian church? For this is universally granted.

Religion, in all its branches, is indispensibly enjoined on all men. Christ calls all men to be his disciples, to profess themselves such, and to act accordingly, on pain of final rejection from his presence. No man can free himself from his obligation to enter into the church, any more than he can free himself from his obligation to prayer, or any other duty. His wickedness may be a *bar* in the way of his admission; but it cannot be an excuse for his voluntary neglect. It is absurd to suppose, that a man's sins should

vacate his obligations to obedience. They who apprehend that they have no right to the communion of saints, ought by no means, to make themselves easy in this state. The command still extends to them; and their immediate concern should be, to repent of that sinfulness, which obstructs their compliance with it.

2. The question is not, whether one ought to come to the communion in an *impenitent, unconverted* state; for no man is allowed to continue in such a state. The scripture never proposes, or answers this question, whether a man may attend on this, or that ordinance, while he remains impenitent in his sins? because it grants no man permission to remain so; but commands all men, every where, to repent. It requires them to perform every duty in a pious and holy manner. It allows no neglect of, or hypocrisy and formality in duty. The man, who calls himself a sinner, is not to imagine, that the same duties, or the same tempers, are not required of him, as of others; for all are required to be holy in all manner of conversation, and to be deeply humble for

all the corruptions of their heart, and errors of their life. But,

3. It will be said, though no man ought to remain in a sinful state, yet there are many who know themselves to be in such a state; many who evidently find, that they have no governing regard to GOD and his commands, but are under the prevailing love of sin and the world: Now, ought they, while they perceive themselves to be in this state, to come into the church and attend on the holy communion?

If any ask this question, my answer is, it is a question in which no body is concerned. It cannot possibly be a case of conscience with any man. The person here supposed is one, who knows himself to be an habitual sinner; one who has no governing regard to his duty; but is prevailingly bent to wickedness; and, therefore, he cannot be supposed to have any conscientious solicitude about his duty in this matter. It is absurd to imagine, he should be solicitous to know and do his duty here, and yet have no regard to it in any thing else. If in other external acts of duty he is influ-

enced by unworthy motives, the same unworthy motives, and not a regard to the will of God, would influence him in coming into the church. The question is merely a matter of speculation; it concerns no man's practice. One, who lives regardless of the will of God in general, is just as regardless of it in the case under consideration. He does not wish to be instructed in the matter, that he may conform to the divine will: if he did, he would be as careful to conform to it in things which are already plain. The scripture puts no such case, for it is not a supposable case, that a man, whose heart is set in him to do evil, should have any conscientious scruples in this point, or any other. The proper answer to such an inquirer will be, you are in a most awful state, under the power and guilt of sin. So long as you live in subjection to the flesh, you cannot please God. You are exposed to everlasting condemnation. Repent, therefore, of your wickedness, seek God's forgiveness, and henceforward walk in all his commandments and ordinances blameless.

4. The only question which can be a case

of conscience, and which it concerns us to answer, is this; what a *serious* person ought to do, who is in doubt concerning his spiritual state?

He believes the gospel to be divine, has some sense of its importance, and feels a concern to obtain the salvation which it brings. It is his desire to know, and his purpose to do, the will of God. But still he finds so many corruptions in his heart, and deviations from duty in his practice, that he dares not conclude himself in a state of grace. If he has hopes, they are mingled with painful fears. Now ought such a person to come within the church, and participate in all divine ordinances? Or is he to delay till his fears are dispelled?

This is the real state of the question; and can any hesitate what answer to give?

We have before shewn, that the purpose for which men are called into a church state is that, in the enjoyment of suitable means, they may be trained up in knowledge and holiness, to a preparation for future glory. And if we have the same end in attending on ordinances, as God had in instituting

them, it cannot be doubted but we are qualified for the enjoyment of them. If then we can say, our end in coming to the communion is, that we may conform to God's will, may be in the way of his blessing, and may be directed and quickened in his service, we are undoubtedly warranted to approach it.

For a person to judge whether he may come to the communion, the question rather is, what are his present views, desires and purposes; than what is the habitual state of his soul? The former may be known by immediate inward reflection: the latter is to be discovered only by a course of examination and experience.

Let us now attend to the practice of the apostles.

The Jews, who assembled at the temple on the day of pentecost, to celebrate that festival, beheld with indignation, and treated with mockery, the miraculous gifts of the spirit, then bestowed on the disciples of Jesus, in confirmation of his divine authority. Peter, on this occasion, rose up, and, in a pertinent discourse, laid before them

such striking evidence of Jesus being the promised Messiah, that thousands were convinced of their great guilt in rejecting and crucifying the Lord of glory, and anxiously inquired what they must do? Being told that they must repent and be baptized, for the remission of sins, they gladly received the word, and were baptized, and admitted to the apostle's fellowship. It is the doctrine of this same Peter, that believers must make their calling and election sure, by adding to their faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and every other grace. But does Peter tell these new converts, that, because they had not had time thus to prove the sincerity of their conversion, it was not safe to receive baptism, and enter into the church? Does he advise them to wait awhile till they could manifest the reality of their repentance by it's fruits? No, he admits them to fellowship immediately; but with this important caution, *Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*

In the same manner the apostles conducted themselves in the baptism of Cornelius, the people of Samaria, the jailor, Lydia, and the Ethiopian eunuch.

Had they considered assurance, as a qualification necessary to justify persons in coming into the church, would they not, on these occasions, have cautioned their proselytes against receiving baptism immediately? Would they not have advised them to a greater trial of themselves than could have been made in a few hours?

It cannot be pretended, that these proselytes had a certain knowledge of their own sincerity. Much less can it be supposed, that the apostles knew them to be sound converts. *They* knew men's hearts no otherwise than *we* may know them, by view of what appears in their lives. They could only, hence, form a rational judgment, a charitable presumption. The disciples at Jerusalem believed not Paul to be a disciple, nor did even the apostles venture to receive him as such, till they had evidence from the testimony of Barnabas. Yea, we find in fact, that they admitted into the Christian church many, who afterward appeared to be ungodly. Simon, the sorcerer, is a remarkable instance. We learn from Paul's epistles, that in most of the churches

to which he wrote, there were great numbers of unsound professors. The apostles, therefore, did not know, that all, whom they received into the church, were savingly converted; for it is manifest, that many of them were not so. And since they received new proselytes, whose sincerity, must at present, be doubtful to themselves, as well as others, without the least intimation of a necessity of delaying for the removal of doubts, we may with great safety, conclude, that a serious person, who believes the gospel, and desires to be found in the way of duty, and of the divine blessing, though still in doubt concerning the gracious sincerity of his heart, has a right to come to the communion of the church.

And indeed, if Christians were to delay, till all their doubts were removed, I am afraid few would come to it at all. And perhaps these few would not be of the better sort. While the self confident-hypocrite drew near, the meek, the modest, the humble, would stand afar off.

The members of the church in Corinth, as we learn from Paul's first letter to them,

ran into most scandalous disorders in their attendance on the Lord's supper. They behaved in such a riotous manner, as made it evident that they discerned not the Lord's body; distinguished not this ordinance from a common meal, or even from a Pagan festival. One took before others his own supper; and one was hungry, having eaten nothing before he came to it; and another was drunken, having indulged to excess there; and the poorer members were despised. This unworthy partaking, the apostle rebukes in the severest terms; and warns them, that they were eating and drinking judgment to themselves, of which they had melancholy proof in the sickness and mortality which had been sent among them.

But what advice does he give them in the case? Does he direct them to withdraw from the Lord's table? No, he shews them the danger of coming in this manner, and exhorts them to come better prepared and disposed. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat." He does not say, let a man examine himself and withdraw; but let him examine and partake. "And when

ye come together, tarry for one another; and if any man hunger, let him eat at home, that ye come not together to condemnation." This passage, far from being a just ground of discouragement, proves the point which we have stated, that such as have a desire to comply with a divine institution, are not to delay, on account of their humble doubts concerning their conversion. If the fear of unworthy partaking were a reason for not partaking at all, as well might the fear of praying, or reading and hearing the word, in an unworthy manner, be a reason for omitting these; for it is evident that the scripture enjoins the same temper of heart in *these* duties, as in *that*. The truth is, we are required to attend on every ordinance with godly sincerity; and a suspicion of our insincerity is not an excuse for neglect; but a reason for examination, repentance and amendment.

Some perhaps will say, for some have said, we have sensible desires to approach to God in all his ordinances; but there may be desires which are not gracious; and we fear *ours* are such; we, therefore, dare not ap-

proach, for we think less guilt is incurred by abstinence, than by attendance.

But, consider, God requires your attendance; and you must either attend or forbear, comply or refuse: There is no medium: and certainly there can be no more grace in your *fears*, than there may be in your *desires*. If your desires to attend an ordinance are not spiritual, neither can the fears, which restrain you from attending, be called spiritual: You can, therefore, be no better accepted in your neglect, than in your compliance; for you act on no better principles in the former, than in the latter.

It is in vain to enquire, in what way you shall contract least guilt: Your business is not to contrive how you can sin at the cheapest rate; Your care should be not to sin at all.

If you say, you decline the communion through fear of offending God; examine whether you are not deceived. Are you as conscientious in every thing else, as you would seem to be in this? Are you as much afraid to offend God in other matters, as you pretend to be in this? If you allow

yourselves in any sin, or in the neglect of any duty, be assured it is not the fear of offending God, but something else, that hinders your approach to his table. But if you really have such a fear running through all your conduct, and operating in all your deliberate actions, you have a very good evidence of your right to the holy communion: for, in all acts of worship, you serve God acceptably, when you serve him with reverence and godly fear.

The man found at the marriage feast without a wedding garment, fell under the awful censure of the king, who commanded that he should be bound and cast into outer darkness.

Will you say then, it is the safer part not to come to the marriage feast at all, lest being found unworthy, we share the fate of this guest? Remember, they who made light of the king's invitation, and refused to come to his son's marriage, were treated with no more lenity than the unworthy guest. He sent forth his armies and destroyed them, and burnt up their city. What then shall we conclude? Why, that a wicked man is

safe no where. He who will not forsake iniquity, is secure neither in the church nor out of it.

The crime of this guest was, not that he was found at the *feast:* but that he was found *unsuitably attired.* The same dirt and rags would have been offensive elsewhere.

The servants were ordered to go out into the highways, and call to the marriage as many as they found; and they accordingly gathered together both bad and good. The man, you see, was a poor beggar, called into the king's house, from out of the street. How should he obtain a wedding garment? He had none of his own. He must come to the king's house to receive one; for there was clean raiment, as well as meat and drink. Where then lay his great crime? Surely not in his coming into the king's house, for he was bidden to come; and such as refused were destroyed; but in sitting among the guests in his ragged and defiled condition, and refusing to wear the pure raiment provided for him. And such will be the condemnation of false professors at the last day;

not simply that they have come within God's church, and attended on his ordinances; but that, while they have sat under the gospel dispensation, made a good profession, and enjoyed all the means of holiness, they have continued in the love and practice of their sins; that while they have heard Christ teach in their streets, and have eaten and drunk in his presence, they have been workers of iniquity. We are not to imagine that we may safely work iniquity, if we will only keep out of the church. Such will be condemned wherever they are found. The kingdom of God is come nigh to us; his word and ordinances are given to us; we cannot place ourselves in the condition of heathens, if we would; for God has placed us in a very different condition. The light has risen upon us; the word of salvation is sent unto us. And now what choice shall we make? If we treat God's ordinances with utter contempt, we are condemned; if we attend upon them in such a manner as to receive no benefit from them, still we are condemned. Our only safety then is, to profess the gospel, and obey it; name the name of Christ and depart from iniqui-

ty; this is to come to the marriage supper; and put on the wedding garment.

Let us fear lest we receive the grace of God in vain. Let us beware lest our privileges, instead of being the means of our salvation, serve only to aggravate our final condemnation.

You see how the case stands. All are required to come within God's church, and attend on his appointed ordinances; and none are allowed to do this in a hypocritical and ungodly manner.

Your duty lies plain before you; study no evasions; God's commands are express; your obligation to obey is indispensible. Attend on the ordinance in question, and every other, as you have opportunity; keep in view the end of their institution, which is the promotion of faith and purity. Imagine not that ordinances operate by a kind of charm, to do you good without making you better; you will only be accepted in hearing Christ teach, and in eating in his presence, when you also depart from iniquity. For his kingdom is not merely "meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

1 Corin. i. 2.

Unto the Church of God, which is at Corinth; to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.

WE have already considered the *nature* of a Christian church; the *purpose* of its institution; the relation of *children* to it; and the *qualifications* necessary to an attendance on its ordinances.

What now lies before us is,

V. To explain that *fellowship*, or *communion*, which does, or ought to subsist among professing Christians, whether in the same or in divers churches.

To this subject, we are led by the last clause in our text; "Grace and peace to the church of God in Corinth, with all who,

in every place, call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours."

We are here taught, that, as all Christians, in whatever place they may dwell, or may worship, are disciples of the same Lord, and call on God in the name of the same Mediator; so there is an important relation, and ought to be a sacred fellowship among them.

For the illustration of this matter, I would observe,

I. There is a *virtual* fellowship or communion among all true saints, whether near or remote: whether known or unknown to each other. They are all engaged in the same design, united in the same interest, and partakers of many of the same things.

This is the sense in which the word is most frequently used in scripture; and this is analogous to the sense which it ordinarily bears in common life. Particularly,

Real saints have *fellowship in the gospel.* They have received one and the same rule of faith and practice. Though they may differ in their opinions concerning some particular things contained in the gospel, yet

their sentiments in the essential doctrines and precepts of it, are the same.

They have received one *common faith*; *like precious faith*. Though their faith may differ in its extent and degree, yet, in its object, nature and influence, it is one and the same. The object of it is divine truth; the nature of it is receiving the love of the truth; the influence of it is purifying the heart.

They are all formed to the same *holy temper*. They are renewed after the image of God; are joint partakers of a divine nature. There may be great variety in the time, manner and circumstances of their renovation, and in the strength and degree of the Christian temper; but holiness in its general nature, is the same in all. It is a conformity to God's moral character.

They are all partakers of the same divine *spirit*. There are diversities of gifts and operations; but it is the same spirit that worketh all in all. Hence the apostle speaks of "the fellowship of the spirit," and "the communion of the Holy Ghost."

They are engaged in the same *good work*;

in the same *great design.* They are working out their salvation, and promoting in their respective places, the interests of Christ's kingdom. They are fellow-labourers in the same service, the service of God and their own souls. They are fellow-workers in the same holy calling. They are fellow-soldiers in the same spiritual warfare; fighting against the same enemies, sin, satan, and the world; applying the same armour, the shield of faith, the helmet of hope, the breast-plate of righteousness, and the sword of the spirit; and they act under the same leader, Jesus the captain of their salvation.

They have one common *interest.* They have a joint interest in the blessed God; for there is one God and Father of all, who is above all, through all, and in them all. They bear the same relation to Jesus Christ; for there is one Lord and Saviour, by whom are all things, and they by him. There is one common salvation, in which they all are sharers. They are all justified by the same atonement, washed in the same blood, sanctified by the same grace, and saved by

the same intercession. They have an interest in the same promises, and a title to the same inheritance. They are called in the same hope, and are joint heirs of the same glory. They are fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

In these respects, there is a fellowship among all sincere Christians. In many of these things, saints on earth have communion with those in Heaven.

One cannot but remark here, how diverse this fellowship is, from that which some boast of; *a mutual sympathy, or fellow feeling, between sincere Christians, by which one immediately perceives the grace, and knows the character of another.* The scripture never uses the word *fellowship* in this sense, nor does it speak of any such thing in other terms. It is certain, that the apostles and first Christians were not acquainted with such a sympathetic intercourse of spirits. If they were, why did not the eleven disciples discern, that Judas was a hypocrite? Why did not the Christians of Jerusalem believe Paul to be a disciple? Why did not they feel his graces, when, after his conver-

sion, he essayed to join himself to them? Why could not the apostles themselves be satisfied of his conversion, without the testimony of Barnabas? What occasion was there, that Christians should carry with them letters of recommendation, as we find they did, when they travelled to places where they had not been known?

As the gospel knows no such correspondence of heart between Christians; and never once uses the word fellowship or communion in any such sense, it is a perversion of scripture, as well as reason, to pretend to such a thing now, and call it by a scripture name. I proceed to observe,

2. Besides the *virtual* communion before described, among sincere Christians, there is an *actual* communion among those who are known to, and have intercourse with, one another. This consists in mutual regards and good offices.

The good Christian extends his benevolence to all, to strangers, heathens and enemies; and, from this principle, shews kindness to all, as far as their occasions require,

and his circumstances permit. But for them who appear to him in the character of saints, he has a love, not only of benevolence, but also of esteem and approbation. He wishes well to all, whether good or bad; but he values men chiefly according to their virtuous conversation. While he is disposed to do good to all, he reckons himself under some superior obligations to those who are of the household of faith. He delights in the saints as the excellent of the earth, and is the companion of them who fear God. He loves the brethren, and such he esteems all Christians, whether they belong to the same society with him, or to another. He confines not his regard to those of his own sect, or his own particular community; but, like the apostles, extends it to all who, in every place, call on the name of Jesus Christ, *their* Lord, as well as *his*, and the common Saviour of them who believe.

In order to the exercise of true Christian love, it is not necessary to know the sincerity of men's hearts. It is enough that, by their profession and conversation, they

appear to us in the character of Christian brethren, and by their works give us reasonable ground to think they have faith. We may in a proper sense, have this *actual* fellowship with one who is not a sincere Christian; and may not have it with one who is such. So long as Judas appeared in the character of a disciple, his brethren had fellowship with him; they esteemed him, placed confidence in him, and even thought him better than themselves; but with Paul, the disciples at Jerusalem had not this *actual* fellowship; they confided not in him, nor believed him to be a disciple, till he produced some proper evidence of a change in his sentiments and practice.

3. There is also a *special* communion, which does, or ought to take place among those Christians, who are united in the same particular church, or religious society.

As they have explicitly covenanted together for social worship and common edification, so they are under peculiar obligations to each other, unitedly to pursue this important purpose.

This *special* communion principally con-

sists in a joint attendance on the ordinances of Christ.

It is said of those who received the word preached by Peter, on the day of pentecost, "that they continued stedfast in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers. They were together, and continued daily with one accord in the temple; praising God." The apostle to the Hebrews exhorts the professors of religion, "that they consider one another, to provoke to love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of themselves together. St. Paul speaks of the Corinthian believers, as "coming together in the church, and into one place." He represents "the whole church as coming together in one place," for breaking of bread, for social prayer, and for attendance on the preaching of the word. These expressions teach us, that the members of a particular church ought to walk together in the ordinances, and unitedly to attend on the stated worship of God as they are able, without unnecessary neglect. And, indeed, it is included in the very idea of a particular church, that

they worship God together, at the same time, and in the same place. The apostle directs the Corinthians, "when they come together, to tarry for one another;" for which surely there could be no reason, if they might disperse here and there, and some worship in one place, and some in another, and some no where.

The acceptableness of worship, indeed, depends not on the place where it is performed. But it much depends on a spirit of peace and union among the worshippers. For this reason, the church is to come together into one place, that there may be no schism, but all her members may with one mind, and one mouth glorify God. They must be builded together, that they may become an habitation of God through the spirit; must be fitly framed together, that they may grow into an holy temple in the Lord.

There may be frequent occasions for the members of the same church to meet for social worship in different places, and even in private houses. Paul, when he abode in Ephesus, preached and taught both publicly,

and from house to house. We are not to imagine a temple, or public house, so peculiarly sacred, that divine worship can no where else be useful to men, or pleasing to the Deity. The private meetings of christians, conducted with a real view to peace and edification, are much to be commended. But when any of the members of a church withdraw from the usual place of worship, and assemble elsewhere, either with an intention to cause division, or in a manner which tends to it, they violate the order of Christ's house, and interrupt the communion which ought to subsist in it. Though Paul taught from house to house, yet he approved not those teachers, who *crept* into houses to lead the simple captive, and disturb Christian fellowship. He warns Christians to mark and avoid those who cause divisions, for such serve not the kingdom of Christ, but their own private designs. One great end of social worship is peace and union; and it ought always to be conducted in a manner which tends not to defeat, but promote this end. It is not the sacredness of one place rather than another,

but the common edification, which obliges the whole church to come together in one place. The members no longer walk in fellowship, than they thus unitedly attend the sacred orders of Christ's house.

Among divine ordinances, the *Lord's supper* deserves particular attention; for one main design of this was to be a mean of brotherly communion. Eating and drinking together, at the same table, is a *natural* act of fellowship. Doing this at the Lord's table is an act of *Christian* fellowship. "The cup which we bless, and the bread which we break, is the communion of Christ's blood, and of his body:" and by our joint participation of them, we acknowledge ourselves to be one family, the children of one parent, the disciples of one Lord. "We being many are one body, and one bread," or loaf; "for we are all partakers of that one loaf." This ordinance is a love feast, and ought to be "kept, not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." No trifling causes should divert or detain us from it; and no evil passions accompany us in it.

And here I cannot but take notice of a practice too common among the professors of religion; *their withdrawing from the Lord's table, because a particular brother has injured, or offended them;* for which I find no foundation in the gospel. We are, indeed, to "withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly." But how? By breaking up the communion? No, but by "putting away the wicked person from among us; and by purging out the old leaven, that we may be a new lump." We may think our brother unworthy of the privilege which he assumes; but shall *his* unworthiness deprive *us* of the privilege? We are, in proper season, to take the measures prescribed in the gospel, for his reformation; but, in the mean time, we are neither to absent ourselves from the table, nor to forbid his attendance; for we can justly exclude him only by conviction in a regular process. If the case is so circumstanced, that sufficient evidence for his conviction cannot be produced, he must be left to the judge of all men. Whatever our opinion may be of his guilt, we are not to

withdraw on account of his attendance. Judge nothing before the time.

You will say, *Charity is necessary in our attendance at Christ's table, but with such a brother, how can we sit down in charity ?* People often confound themselves in this matter, by their partial notions of charity. If by charity were intended an opinion of others as good Christians, you could not sit down in charity with those of whom you thought otherwise. But where do you find this description of charity ? or where is this good opinion of all your fellow communicants required, in order to your sitting at Christ's table ? It is the effect, not the essence of charity, to hope all things. If you have a benevolent, meek, forgiving temper toward those whom you think not to be true Christians, you can set down in charity with them ; for this is the scriptural idea of charity. If you remember a brother hath ought against you, go and be reconciled to him. If you have ought against a brother, go and tell him his fault. If he repent forgive him ; if he repent not, still indulge no rancor nor hatred in your heart.

Thus sit down at the feast in charity, in kind affection, to your brethren and to all men.

Perhaps some will say, *We withdraw from the table when a brother has injured us, because his presence awakens in us unsuitable passions.*

But remember, the indulgence of malevolent passions is your sin; and you are not to absent yourselves from communion, but to dismiss *them;* and so keep the feast in sincerity and love. Malice and ill-will indulged in the heart are wrong, whoever is the object, whether a brother, or a heathen. And on this plea, you might as well withdraw, when the latter, as when the former had done you an injury.

Consider also, you are required to pray, and to hear the word, with the same charity which is required in the supper. "When you stand praying, you are to forgive if you have ought against any man." And you are to "lay apart all guile, malice and envy;" and thus to "desire the sincere milk of the word; receiving it with meekness." Your plea, therefore, might certainly as well be

urged for neglecting public worship, or even family prayer, if the offender happens to be present, as for absenting from the supper.

The truth is, you are never to excuse yourselves from acts of duty, on account of evil passions working in you; but immediately to war against them.

It will be asked, *How can I have communion with a church, while she tolerates ungodly and scandalous members?*

But let me ask you, my friend, does she tolerate them? If she does, whose business is it to take the first step towards rectifying the disorder? It is yours, as much as any man's. It is yours principally. You pretend that you see such persons in the church. Others perhaps see them not, or have not evidence against them. Have you reproved them? Have you taken a brother or two to assist you? Have you brought your complaint to the church? If you have done none of these things, you are the most reprehensible of any member; for you see the sin, and expose it not. Go first, and do your own duty. You can have no pretence for withdrawing, till you know that

the church actually tolerates vicious characters; and this you cannot know till you have taken the measures which Christ enjoins.

But though I may think a church to be, in the main, a true church, yet if I see errors in her, ought I not to testify against them by withdrawing from them? By no means. Your withdrawing is no testimony against her particular errors; it is only a general, indiscriminate charge. It signifies that you are displeased at something; but points out nothing. You are to commune with her; but not adopt her errors; then your conduct will speak an intelligible language. Christ testified against the errors of the Jewish church, and laboured for her reformation; but still he held communion with her as a church of God. Let his example be your rule.

This leads me to observe farther, that special fellowship among the members of a particular church must include mutual watchfulness, reproof and exhortation.

As Christians, in the present state, are but imperfect, one end of their covenanting and

associating together is, that they may afford mutual assistance in the great concerns of religion, and be fellow helpers in the work of their common salvation. Accordingly, they are required to consider and admonish, comfort and encourage one another, as there is occasion; to be all subject one to another, and to be clothed with humility. By virtue of our special relation, as members of one church, we are to rebuke our brethren, and not suffer sin upon them. Those who offend, we are first to address in a more private manner: them who are deaf to private expostulations, we are to bring before the church; such as contemn the counsels of the church are to be cut off from her communion; but the penitent are to be restored in the spirit of meekness. Once more.

Our special fellowship requires mutual candor, condescension and forbearance.

We are to consider ourselves, and our brethren, not as sinless, but imperfect beings, attended with infirmities, subject to temptations, liable to offend, and to be offended. While we are cautious not to give offence by doing things grievous to them,

we should make all reasonable allowances for them, when they do things grievous to us. We should neither stiffly oppose, nor zealously urge indifferent matters. We should not severely animadvert on smaller faults, nor magnify accidental failings into heinous crimes; but give every one's conduct the most favourable turn it will bear. Such is the apostle's advice. "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. Him who is weak in the faith receive ye; but not to doubtful disputation. Let us not judge one another; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block in his brother's way. Be of the same mind one towards another. Condescend to men of low estate. Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. Follow the things which make for peace and edification. Let all your things be done with charity."

4. The last branch of Christian fellowship, which I shall mention, is that which ought to subsist among different churches;

among all who, in every place, call on the name of our common Lord.

As all Christian churches are united under, and subject to one head, so they are members one of another, and therefore ought like the members of the natural body, to preserve a reciprocal intercourse. The apostle says, " As the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles; whether we be bond or free." Care, therefore, should be taken, " that there be no schism, or division in the body, but all the members should have the same care one for another."

A particular church ought to consider herself, not as an unconnected society, but as a part of Christ's general kingdom: her care must not be confined to herself, but extended to her sister churches: She is to seek not merely her own profit, but the profit of many.

Some diversity of sentiment and practice may take place in different churches, and

yet all remain true churches of Christ; as there may be divers opinions among the members of the same church, and they still be real Christians. We are neither to reject a church, nor to exclude a particular Christian from our fellowship, for supposed errors, which appear not to be of such a nature and magnitude, as to subvert the foundation of Christianity. Our apostle teaches us, 'that we are to regard all as our fellow christians, and all churches as sister churches, who, in every place, call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours; who profess one body, one spirit, and one hope of their calling; and who hold the same head from which all the body is knit together. In a word, he cautions us, that 'we reject not those whom God has received.' If we know a particular church, in which errors are admitted, we are to afford our assistance for her amendment. But so long as we believe God owns her, by continuing to her his word and ordinances, and blessing them for her spiritual benefit; it is arrogance, it is impiety, for us to disown her. We have no warrant to withdraw our

fellowship from a church, unless she has essentially departed from the gospel; or imposes on us terms of fellowship, which we cannot in conscience comply with.

If it be asked, in what actions different churches are to have fellowship? I answer; They ought occasionally to commune with each other in the word, prayer, and breaking of bread; to admit each other's members to occasional communion with them; to recommend their own members to other churches, into whose vicinity they may remove; and to receive members of other churches on their recommendation. When Apollos passed from Ephesus into Achaia, the brethren in Ephesus wrote to the disciples in Achaia to receive him. When Phebe went from Cenchrea to Rome, Paul wrote to the Roman church, that they should receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints.

Churches are also to have fellowship, by mutual counsel and advice, when difficulties arise.

Though no church, or number of churches have an absolute jurisdiction over other churches, yet they should always be ready

to afford help and assistance, at the request of sister churches, as occasions may require. We find in the history of the Acts, that the church of Antioch, on a difficulty which arose there relating to circumcision, sent Barnabas and Paul, and certain others with them, to Jerusalem, to consult the apostles and elders of the church there, and to ask their advice upon the matter. When those messengers from Antioch came to Jerusalem, they were received by the apostles and elders, and by the church. And when the apostles had determined the matter in question, they, together with the church, sent messengers, and by them, a letter to the Antiochean and other churches in the vicinity, declaring their opinion and advice in the case referred to them.

This example as well as the reason of the thing, shews the propriety and necessity of mutual assistance among churches by counsel and advice, in order to the common edification and comfort.

I have now distinctly illustrated the several matters proposed to your consideration. Permit me, before I conclude, to

point out to you the proper improvement of this subject.

We who have made an open profession of religion, and have joined ourselves to the church of God, with an explicit engagement to walk together in his commandments and ordinances, are now called upon to consider the obligations we are under, and the duties especially incumbent upon us.

1. Let us be well settled in the principles of that religion which we profess.

We are called into a church state, that, being edified in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God, we may be no more children, carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and the cunning craftiness wherewith they lie in wait to deceive. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to day, and for ever. His gospel is ever the same; not variable like the humours and opinions of men. Therefore, be ye not carried about with divers and strange doctrines, as if religion was sometimes one thing, and sometimes another. It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. We ought not indeed to be stiff and inflexible

in our own sentiments and usages, merely because they are our own. We should give up former opinions, and adopt others, when evidence is offered sufficient to justify the change. But then a fickleness of temper, a versatility of sentiment, a disposition to fall in with every novel opinion, and to follow every impulse of fancy, is utterly unbecoming a Christian. Such unsteadiness indicates either the want of competent knowledge, or the want of any fixed principles in religion.

Amidst the various opinions which are propagated and maintained, an honest christian, I am sensible, may often be perplexed to determine what is truth. But then, I would observe, it is by no means necessary, that he should be able to answer every argument adduced in support of error. There are certain great and leading principles, in which every christian must be supposed to be settled; and by these he may try the doctrines proposed to him, and judge whether they are of God.

There are two grand points which the gospel always keeps in view. One is the

indispensible necessity of holiness in heart and life, in order to eternal happiness. The other is, our entire dependence on the grace and mercy of God, through the Redeemer, for pardon, sanctification and glory. Every man who professes to be a Christian, must be supposed to be settled in these grand points. The man, who imagines that he is not indebted to, nor dependent on a Saviour, or that there is no need of a conformity to his holy pattern and precepts, in order to final salvation, can, with no consistency, pretend to be a christian.

All such doctrines, as plainly contradict either of these principles; such, on the one hand, as exalt men above a dependence on Jesus Christ, and the influences of the divine spirit; and such, on the other hand, as confound the difference between virtue and vice, and obstruct the influence of the divine commands, must be rejected, whatever specious arguments may be urged in their favour.

2. Let us maintain a constant, devout attendance on the appointed ordinances of Christ.

If we carelessly neglect these, we contradict the design of a church, and our own character as members of it.

Christians are bound to attend on all ordinances, one as well as another. The gospel makes no distinction. The primitive Christians continued stedfast in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer.

There are among us some, who profess the religion of Christ, and who, by their regular attendance, at the sanctuary, as well as by their general conversation, express a regard for the religion which they profess; but yet absent themselves from the Lord's table. Such was not the practice of Christians in the apostolic times. The celebration of the supper was then a part of the stated worship of the Lord's day; and in this, as well as in other parts, all professors joined. They continued stedfast in fellowship with the apostles, as well by breaking bread, as by prayer and doctrine. The disciples at Troas, we are told, came together, on the first day of the week, not only to hear Paul preach, but also to break bread.

I urge none to come blindly, or against his conscience, to the holy table. Every one must judge for himself, and be persuaded in his own mind. One man cannot see with another's eyes, nor act on another's faith. But then, it is a plain fact, Christ calls all to be his disciples, and commands all his disciples to shew forth his death by an attendance on his supper. And therefore, such as are hindered by scruples concerning their fitness, must not make themselves easy with them, but take pains for the removal of them. They must seek light, that, if they are in an error, they may rectify it; and if they are under sin, they may repent of it. They must humbly apply to God for his grace to lead them into truth, and to purify their souls; and whatever doubts they have about a particular ordinance, they must diligently attend on all those means which they think themselves warranted to use. 'The meek, God will guide in judgment; the meek he will teach his way.'

3. We are called to brotherly love, peace and unity.

The gospel urges love as the bond of perfectness, as a virtue of the first importance. Paul, in his epistles to the churches, never forgets to recommend to them, that they be joined together in the same mind—that they speak the same things—that they have the same love—that there be no divisions among them—that they avoid such as cause divisions and offences. To shew how essential unity is to the being of a church, he compares it to a household, which subsists by love, and in which all the members have one interest, and are guided by one head—To a building, all the parts of which are framed and compacted together—To a natural body, all whose limbs are animated by the same vital principle, and feel for each other.

Brotherly love is an extensive grace. It is not confined to those of our own society; but reaches to all Christians, and Christian societies in every place. The apostle wishes grace and peace to all, who, in every place, call on the name of Jesus. We are to consider all as our brethren, who appear to hold the essentials of the Christian faith, and to

maintain a practice agreeable to it; and to all such brotherly love must extend. If our love reaches no farther than to those of our own sect, or those who usually worship with us, it is only a party spirit; it has nothing of the nature of Christian love.

Against such a contracted idea of love, the apostle, in our context, carefully guards us. 'It has been declared to me,' says he, 'that there are contentions among you. Every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ.' They were puffed up for one teacher against another. One admired this preacher; another that; and another a third; and, by their party attachments, raised troublesome disputes and dangerous contentions in the church. 'But,' says he, 'Is Christ divided?' Were ye not all baptized in his name? Have ye not all professed his religion? Why then run ye into parties, as if Christ was divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Why say ye, 'We are of Paul?' Do ye expect salvation through him? He was not crucified for you. He only preaches Christ crucified; and Peter

and Apollos do the same. 'Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?' Do ye imagine that baptism was designed to form you into distinct sects? or that every one ought to follow the minister who baptized him, in opposition to others? And do ye think, that ye ought to love and esteem, as brethren, those only who are baptized by the same apostle, or in the same place and manner as ye were, as if ye were baptized into the name of the man, who baptized you? No, ye were baptized in the name of Christ, and are become members of his body, and, therefore, ye are the brethren of all Christians, by whomsoever baptized; for ye are all baptized into one body.

You see, that baptism, a Christian profession, and a relation to a particular church, are not designed to unite one company of Christians here, and another there, in opposition to each other; but rather to unite the whole Christian world. This then, and this only, is true Christian love, which extends its good wishes to the whole household of faith; regards, as Christ's disciples, all who, in every place, call on his name;

and pursues, not merely its own private ends, but the general interest of Christ's kingdom, and the common welfare of his subjects.

True Christian love to those of our own society cannot stop short of a general love of saints. The love of the brethren, as such, is a love of their holy and virtuous character; and if, on this account, we love our nearest brethren, for the same reason we shall love all, who exhibit the same character. The good Christian desires the prevalence of religion every where: he would rejoice that all men were virtuous and happy. He will not, therefore, pursue the religious interest of his own community, family or person, in ways prejudicial to the general interest of religion. He will not consult merely his own edification, or that of those with whom he is immediately connected; but will seek the profit of many, that they may be saved.

This love of the brethren leads to a more general love of the human race. Christians are required 'to add to their brotherly kindness charity;' 'to increase and abound in

their love one toward another, and toward all men.'

One who loves the brethren, because they have the temper and obey the laws of Christ, must be supposed himself to have the same temper, and to obey the same laws. Christ exemplified, and has enjoined a universal philanthropy. He did good to enemies, as well as friends; he prayed for his crucifiers, as well as for his disciples; and he has enjoined on us the same extensive benevolence.

Whatever pretensions we make to Christian fellowship, if our love is confined to any particular community, or even to Christian professors, and does not, in suitable expressions of meekness, goodness and moderation, extend itself to others; it is not that love of the brethren which Christ enjoins; for where is brotherly kindness, there will be charity. The brotherly love, which Christ has taught, will make us meek and gentle toward all men. It will tame and soften the passions, correct and sweeten the temper, and dispose us to shew kindness to all

men, whether they be Christians or heathens, good men or sinners.

4. As members of the church of God, we are called to an exemplary holiness.

Christ gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify it, and finally present it glorious. We are called to be saints; separated from the world, that we may be a peculiar people, zealous of good works; placed under gospel light, that we may be the children of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, shining among them as lights in the world. The honour of religion, and our own profession oblige us to walk circumspectly among men. Those, whom the apostles admitted to their fellowship, were exhorted to keep themselves from an untoward generation. The loose and unguarded conversation of Christian professors, gives occasion to others to speak reproachfully of religion itself. They are, therefore, to walk in wisdom toward them who are without; to provide things honest in the sight of all men, that the enemies of truth may be put to silence, having no evil thing to say of them.

5. Let us exercise a mutual watchfulness in our Christian relation.

We are called into this relation, that we may by love serve one another, and be fellow workers unto the kingdom of God. Let us be ready to receive, as well as to give, counsel and reproof, as there may be occasion; and in this imperfect state occasions will be frequent. Much allowance is indeed to be made for human weakness, for misapprehension, and for wrong report. We expect such allowance from our brethren, and they are entitled to it from us. Too great forwardness to remark, and too hasty a zeal to reprove every trivial fault, and every unguarded action in our brethren, will tend rather to vex, than reform them; rather to lessen our influence, than to mend their tempers. Reproof is a delicate matter. It is not to be omitted, when occasion calls for it; but it should be given with tenderness and prudence, that it may be received with meekness and gratitude.

6. Our subject reminds us of the duty which we owe to our youth.

If the children of professing Christians

are within God's visible church, they are entitled to our particular notice and regard. Though it should be conceded, that baptism denominates them members of the catholic church only, and they become not members of any local church, till by their own act, they join themselves to it, yet there is a duty which that church peculiarly owes to them, in which they were publicly given up to God, of which their parents are members, and under the immediate inspection of which they live and act. If they are members of the church at large, those Christians, among whom providence places them, and who are witnesses of their conduct, are especially bound to watch over them.

We ought then to admonish and reprove them, whenever we see them behave in a manner unsuitable to the relation, which they bear to Christ; to rebuke their levity, impiety and profaneness, that we may restrain them from making themselves vile; to put them in remembrance of the sacred obligations, which they are under; and call their attention to that solemn day, when every work will be brought into judgment.

While they are under the immediate government of parents or others, it becomes us, in the most tender and friendly manner to give those, who have the care of them, information of their misbehaviour, when it is gross and repeated, and appears to proceed from a perverse disposition. If Christians would thus assist each other in the government of their families, at the same time exhibiting an example worthy of their character, much service might be done to the rising generation, and to the general interest of religion.

When youth have arrived to competent age, it would be proper that the church, as a body, should deal with them for open immoralities, obstinately persisted in against more private admonitions; unless they disavow their relation to the church, and her authority over them. In this case she may, in a formal manner cut them off from among their people, and declare them no longer under her care.

7. Our subject deserves the serious attention of the youth.

My children; God, in his good provi-

dence, has ordered the place of your birth and education, under the light of the gospel, within his church, and in Christian families. The most of you have been solemnly dedicated to God in baptism, and have received the visible seal of his covenant. See then, that you walk worthy of the privileges to which you are born, and of the character which you bear, as God's children, set apart to be his. Receive, with filial reverence and obedience, the instructions and counsels of your parents, who have bound themselves to God for your virtuous behaviour. Attend on the appointed means of religious knowledge, converse with the holy scriptures and other instructive books, seriously regard the stated services of the sanctuary, and endeavour in the use of these advantages, to become wise to salvation, and to furnish yourselves unto every good work. As you have been consecrated to God, live to him. "Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds." Let your hearts be impressed with a sense of your sinful and helpless condition; look to Je-

sus as the only Saviour of a lost and guilty world: go to God in his name, and humbly implore the renewing and sanctifying influences of his holy spirit. Make an actual dedication of yourselves to God through Jesus Christ, deliberately resolving on a course of pure religion, and let all your conversation be as becomes the gospel. Keep up a daily correspondence with God in secret. Think and speak of him with reverence, detesting and avoiding every species of profanity. Cease to hear the instructions which cause to err from the words of knowledge. Entertain no licentious opinions, such as would encourage vice or pacify the conscience under guilt. Say to evil doers, depart from us, for we will keep the commandments of our God. Flee youthful lusts, and follow after righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. And rest not till you have actually taken the covenant bonds on yourselves, by a public profession of religion, and have come up to all gospel ordinances. Do not this rashly and thoughtlessly, but humbly and seriously, in

the fear of God, and in obedience to him. Think not that you have a right to live at large. You are bound to confess Christ's name before men, and to submit to the government of his church. It was foretold by the prophet, that, when God should pour out his spirit on the offspring of his people, one would say, I am the Lord's, and another would subscribe with his hand to the Lord. Thus the church would increase by the accession of the young; her sons would come from far, and her daughters be nursed at her side. You cannot be said to have fulfilled the obligations of your baptism, so long as you live in a careless neglect of any of the ordinances of Christ. There is reason to believe, that in the institution of the supper, Christ had a primary regard to the young, who were always the objects of his particular attention. This ordinance was instituted immediately after the celebration of the passover, which was a figure of the suffering Saviour. In allusion to that festival, Christ is called our passover, sacrificed for us. And in allusion to the manner in which the passover was eaten, we

are required " to keep the feast" of the holy supper, " not with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Now the special reason assigned for the passover was, that " when children in time to come should enquire what mean ye by this service?" The parent might thence take occasion to instruct them " how the Lord saved his people from Egypt." Accordingly the youth were to attend on the passover, in the appointed place, as soon as they were able to " bring an offering in their hand." Now if the supper succeeds in the place of the passover, was not this one intention of it, that the young, on seeing this service, might be led to inquire, what was meant by it, and thus open the way for instruction in the glorious redemption by Jesus Christ. Come then, my children, attend a festival appointed for *you*. Here behold what your affectionate Saviour has done and suffered for such lost and helpless creatures as *you*. Behold, admire and love; smite your breasts and return with new sentiments of the evil of your sins, and new resolutions

of future obedience. Remember that all ordinances, and this in particular, were instituted as means of promoting a holy life; and "let every one, who nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.

8. The invitation given to the young shall now be addressed to others. "Come, join yourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant, which shall not be forgotten."

The Son of God has come down from Heaven, and has purchased a church with his own blood. Here he offers that salvation which guilty mortals need. He prescribes the terms on which it may become yours. He has appointed ordinances, in the use of which you may be made meet for the enjoyment of it in Heaven. He has particularly instituted the ordinance of the supper, to remind you of his dying love, and the rich blessings purchased by his blood. He has required your attendance, to awaken your remembrance of him, warm your love to him, and strengthen your faith in him.

Have you any sense of your guilt and unworthiness, and of his wonderful good-

ness and love? Any desire to become conformed to his image, attempered to his gospel, and entitled to his salvation? Any gratitude to your Divine Benefactor for all the great things which he has done and suffered for you? Any purpose of heart to honor and obey your glorious Redeemer and Lord? Any concern to promote peace and unity among his disciples, to excite and encourage them to love and good works, and to advance the general interest of his kingdom? Then come and confess his name, declare your regard to his religion, subscribe with your own hand, to him, attend on the ordinances of his house, walk in fellowship with his professed disciples, join your influence to promote his cause, and shew by your holy conversation, that you really believe and heartily love the religion which you profess.

To conclude, let us all unite our endeavours to make Christ's church glorious. Let us as workers together with Christ, and with one another, contribute in our respective places, and according to our several abilities, to edify and enlarge it. Let us

not content ourselves with appearing as members of the visible church here below; but be concerned to become real members of the invisible church above, that when the time of our departure is come, we may go to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, the spirits of just men made perfect, the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are enrolled in Heaven.

THE END.

J. G. Barnard, Printer, Skinner Street, London.